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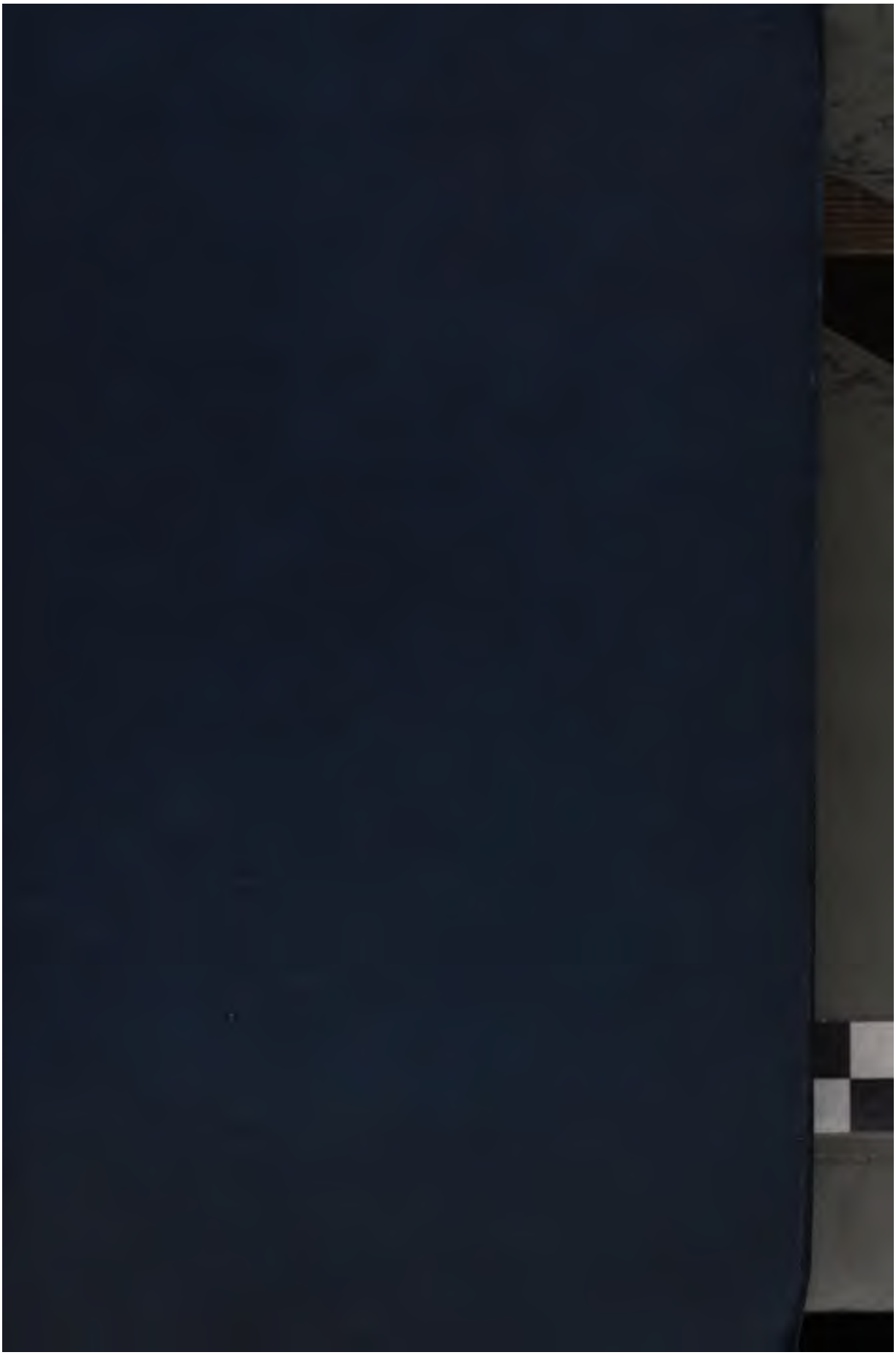

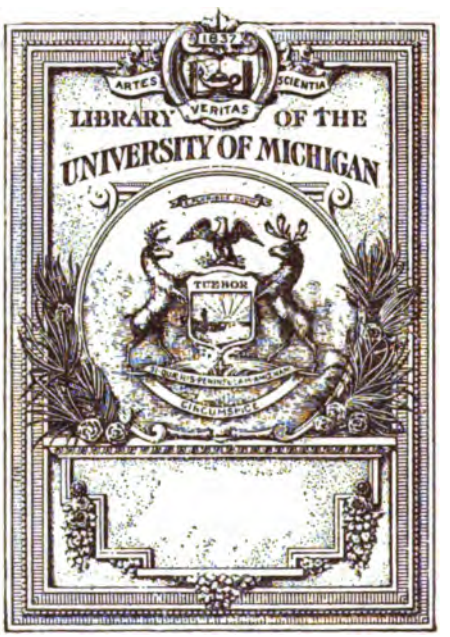
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WILLIAM DE MORGAN AND HIS WIFE

Wm De Morgan

ÆTAT 70

from a photograph by Ethel Glazebrook

WILLIAM DE MORGAN AND HIS WIFE

BY

Mrs. A. M. W. STIRLING

Author of "Coke of Norfolk," etc.

With a Preface by the late Sir William Richmond, K.C.B., R.A.

'Mr. De Morgan is a national institution; and one would as soon think of criticising the Bank of England as of criticising one of his novels.'

—Literary Supplement of *The Times*

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1922

AUTHORIZED EDITION

Wahr
8157
Riat
8-3-1923

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

To

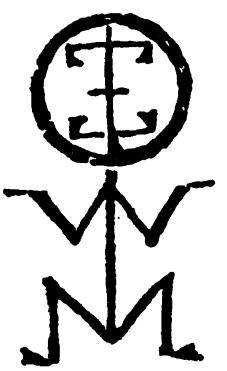
BOTH

'Have you ever picked a sheaf of brilliant autumn leaves, glowing like transparent rubies in the sunlight, and carried them home to your dim room? If you have, you have known that which I felt. Where was the glow, the glory, the crimson flame? All gone. . . .

'And just so from my written words had faded the rich glow that shone around them in my fancy when they were still unwritten. Alas! the leaves—the words—were alike worthless by themselves.'

From Generation to Generation.
By Lady Augusta Noel.

Composite Monogram for himself and his Wife designed by De Morgan.



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'It is the best thing on Earth—that incessant struggle. . . . Art is more important than you think. But it must be earnest, grim life-earnestness that has no tincture of gain in it or love of earth-fame, only the strength of one's arm, and the whole power of one's being is to be given to it; and to look neither to the right nor to the left, but go straight on doing the best that is in one.'

The Result of an Experiment.

PREFACE

WILLIAM AND EVELYN DE MORGAN

By an Old Friend

(The late Sir William Richmond, R.A.)

I AM not sure if it was in the autumn of 1859 or the spring of 1860, when I was working in the schools of the Royal Academy, that a tall, rather gaunt young man arrived as a *nouveau*, who excited among us of a term's seniority some interest. He was an original, that was evident at starting. His capacious forehead denoted power, his grey eyes tenderness, his delicately formed nose refinement, and his jaw strength. But the commanding characteristic was unmistakably humour. He spoke with a curious accent, his voice, as if it had never quite settled to be soprano or bass, moved with flexibility up and down the scale, and every sentence was finished with a certain drawl. This was a trait caught by many of Rossetti's friends. This youth was William de Morgan, son of the celebrated mathematician and his wife, a distinguished lady, highly cultivated, intimate friend of Carlyle and other leaders of the thought of the times, and much loved by her friends.

He came into the schools at a brilliant moment. Fred Walker, that delicately organized genius, was his senior by one term. Albert Moore, perhaps the most classic painter of the time, was already drawing with great taste in the schools and making noble designs, some pre-Raphaelite, some classical. Andrew Donaldson promised much as a student. Henry Holiday was precocious; but the greatest genius of our set was S. Solomon, that wonderful little Jew who might have risen to any height of distinction if he had chosen to encourage his great gifts. I was the youngest of the group which was composed of ardent young men furnished with ability and determination to labour hard to deserve distinction. It was in this coterie that William De Morgan found himself welcomed. From the day I first shook hands with him till the last, when he sat beside me in sickness, we were close and staunch friends.

As an Academic artist he did not count for much: his genius did not lie in a groove or grooves. His early work was as a designer for stained glass; I have seen some very interesting

work from his hand in that difficult branch of the art into which incompetence too often strays and where genius is so rarely visible. De Morgan, as a son of a great man and a very popular and highly esteemed mother, was early thrown into the intellectual blue. Well grounded at King's College (*sic*) he was a fair classical scholar, but it was not in any portion of his character created by education that he was remarkable. Pre-eminently he was original, entirely uncommonplace. He had a quaint invention, he took a quaint view of everything. He was a master of the unexpected, a creator of paradox, a serious humorist. A very delicate constitution forbade athletics of all kinds. His body had to beware of excess, his mind could adroitly play with it. Public opinion he cared for not a jot; he was his own critic in as much as he always strove for perfection. The progress of his mind was swift as well as persistent; a bit of wire, a bit of wood provided hours of enjoyment for his creative mind, one moment dwelling on a vast scheme for flying or under-water piracy, another in adding some delicacy to the construction of his bicycle.

His extreme ingenuity may have been not altogether an advantage, it made him jump from one subject to another with too facile dexterity. He was not what is commonly called brilliant, it was natural rhetoric; he never talked for effect. So simply and oddly was his very simple mind arranged that he could play with his ideas and command them to quaintness or paradox, as he wished, without ever rendering them ridiculous. In this respect De Morgan was Dickens's equal, the Dickens that he knew so well and so deeply admired, but with no plagiarism. As Dickens's characters are his and only his, so are De Morgan's. Nobody else has ever made quainter people to say quainter things, which, however, are never forced but just bubble out as the stream of a character moves on.

De Morgan's writing has been compared with Thackeray's, but surely on close investigation there is little if any similarity. De Morgan was in no sense a satirist: he was a humorist, he was no cynic, he was a playful, wayward optimist who saw kindly, conceived generously, and was much nearer comedy than tragedy. Pathos there was, but of a type quite his own; not of the stage one bit, but entirely employed in a kind of unconscious manner out of the character he was manipulating with such quaint lines and elaborate byplay.

Literature, or rather novel writing, is, on the whole, more universally estimated and valued than any other form of Art by the general public; it is therefore likely that De Morgan will live in the future more by reason of his writings than his designs or superb pottery. He will live among his friends as a delightful companion, a queer unexpected talker, not exactly brilliant, but fantastic, if child-like, by reason of a certain simplicity which took

for granted he could never be a bore, and he never could be, for, clever as he was, ready tongued as he was, a freshness was always maintained which one knew to be quite spontaneous, unaffected and sincere.

His Wife and He

Although William De Morgan was complete as a personality in which each part bore relation to the whole, he was made even more highly finished by the remarkable woman he married and who outlived him but for a short time.

I knew her before her marriage, both in London and in Florence, where she lived so much with her uncle, Spencer-Stanhope, who no doubt was her guide, philosopher and friend in most things, and to whose influence was certainly due the direction that her great gifts as a draughtsman and painter took. It is seldom that a marriage is absolutely successful, where the road of life taken is so similar, where the temperaments are completely in accord, and where no commonplace rubs against life's sharp and tiresome edges ever occur. Evelyn and William De Morgan were absolutely *one*: one in sympathy, in intelligence and its direction, one in tastes, and in perfect companionship. They teased and chaffed one another as school-boys do, they were amused at each other's idiosyncrasies, and I verily believe amused also at their mental similarity. He believed in her Art and she in his. They were both artistic in the highest sense, and where the business capacity came in is a puzzle to every one. She had more than he. His capacity as a business man was probably nil, hers was only a little more than nil; but her money was his, and, with what is often called generosity, she gave it up, as all his and her friends know, to save crashes and to make one more glorious pot.

It is not for me to relate her life, it is written in this book; its splendid dedication to Art and to her husband, her constant going on fighting non-success, always making fresh efforts to achieve perfection of finish and technique as noble as it was strong, as consistent as constant. If her later work is sometimes overcharged with detail, a little over-weight, Evelyn De Morgan was a finished artist of no mean quality. In their respective spheres, he had the humour, the irresponsibility; she supplied sometimes an almost austere integrity and a conscientiousness, carried sometimes so far as to mask slightly the spontaneity of her just conception. She drew beautifully; indeed, the many volumes which remain containing drawings of the nude, and draperies, flowers, leaves—in short all things inanimate—are, perhaps, the most complete efforts of her genius. . . .

• • • • • • • •

Thus far had Sir William Richmond written when death intervened, and this unfinished tribute to his friends remains the last thing ever traced by his pen.

He had, according to what he once mentioned to the author, intended to dwell at far greater length on the arresting personality of Evelyn De Morgan, on her achievement as an artist, especially on the marvel and the purity of her colouring, and on her rich inspiration. Yet the faithfulness of both incomplete portraits, drawn thus in a few facile words, will be apparent to all who knew those of whom he writes: while in this connexion, as certain of his observations may be found duplicated in the volume which follows, it should be mentioned that the preface was designedly written without its writer having seen the work of the biographer; and vice versa.

Only in one particular, however, is a brief elucidation perhaps desirable. The austerity of which he speaks in connexion with Evelyn refers solely to her earnestness in regard to work. Both in art and literature, De Morgan's spontaneity and his happy-go-lucky methods—equally the outcome of a great sincerity—contrast with her profound and studied conscientiousness: but apart from work, the sense of humour shared by both was one of their most marked characteristics. Evelyn had a quick wit, an irrepressible sense of the ludicrous, and a rare gift as a raconteuse. *Even in her most serious mood, her sense of fun would not be suppressed, and a jest, known only to the initiated, peeps from the canvas of her gravest conceptions. To both of them, if life proved, in much, a sorry struggle owing to their disinterested pursuit of an Ideal, combined with their entire lack of worldly wisdom and self-advertisement, it was, in more, a merry adventure to be regarded with laughter in the present and a somewhat misty but enduring hopefulness for that Future which no man can fathom.*

When, late in middle-age, success came to De Morgan, he rejoiced in it with the simplicity and the freshness of a child. To Evelyn all celebrity was hateful, and she valued appreciation only as it proved an incentive to greater effort. Work, to her, was the joy of existence, and she laboured—voluntarily, unceasingly—from the cradle to the grave. 'I knew them for twenty years,' relates one friend, 'and I never heard her mention her painting. 'She had an exquisite and a retiring mind,' her obituary stated when that life-work was done.

It is unusual to find two people, so gifted and so entirely in harmony in their art, who acted and re-acted on each other's genius. Their romance is one before which the pen falters: but which, nevertheless, was an abiding factor in all they have left to the world: and Sir Edward Poynter, P.R.A., looking after De Morgan and his wife one day, as they left his beautiful garden, epitomized the impression created by their presence. 'There,' he said, 'go two of the rarest spirits of the Age.'

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author wishes to express her sincere thanks to all who have aided her in procuring material for the following work.

In America her thanks are due to many unknown but valued friends; particularly to Professor Lyon Phelps for his assistance and cordial sympathy; to Mr. Louis Joseph Vance for the interesting letters he lent; to Miss Olive Russell and others for their contributions of some charming correspondence.

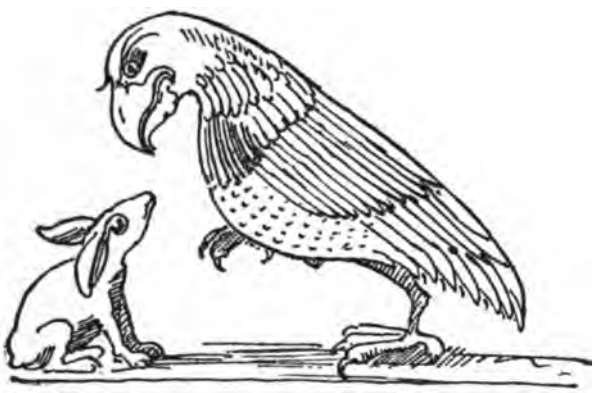
In England the author's thanks are primarily due to Miss May Morris; to Mr. Reginald Blunt, Mr. Halsey Ricardo and Mr. Shaw Sparrow for the correspondence and information they supplied respecting the manufacture of the pottery; to Mr. Richard De Morgan and Mr. Walter Kelsall for assistance with the early history of the family; to Mr. Amherst Tyssen for the extracts from his diary; to Professor and Mrs. Mackail, and to Mr. Henry Holiday and his family for many delightful letters and anecdotes. Thanks are also due to Mary, Countess of Lovelace; to Miss F. Seeley, Mrs. Spencer Pickering, and Mr. Herbert Russell-Cotes for permission to reproduce pictures in their possession; to the authorities of the Victoria and Albert Museum for their leave to publish photographs of the De Morgan pottery in their charge; and to Mrs. E. Smith (*née* Ethel Glazebrook) for the fine photograph taken by her of William De Morgan.

The author also wishes to express her thanks to the editors of the *Burlington Magazine*, the *Bookman*, the *Cornhill*, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Printer's Pie*, *The World's Work*, and the *New York Herald* for their great courtesy in allowing her to quote from articles which have appeared in their publications: likewise to Mr. Pawling for having kindly placed at her disposal Mr. De Morgan's correspondence with the late Mr. William Heinemann.

Her gratitude is also due to many others who have aided her materially by contributing correspondence or information, particularly to the following: Mrs. Allingham, Mr. Stewart Ellis, Deaconess Gilmore (the sister of William Morris), Mr. H. de T. Glazebrook, Lady Glenconner, the Rev. Augustus De Morgan Hensley, Mrs. Horatio Lucas, Mr. Walter De Morgan, Mr. Scott-Moncrieff, Mrs. Bram Stoker, Mrs. G. F. Watts, Mrs. Hugh Woolner,

etc.; and to Mrs. Edward Carpenter and Mr. Lionel Bradgate, M.A., of Trinity College, Oxford, for kindly reading the proofs.

If, however, among the great number of those who have written to her from all parts of the world it has been impossible to mention categorically the names of all to whom she is indebted, or for lack of space to make use of some of the interesting material which they provided, she trusts they will understand that, in writing this book (an endeavour to compress into one volume the story of two full and many-sided lives), she has suffered considerably from what William De Morgan termed 'the true writer's cramp,' and that they will forgive her sins of omission as well as of commission.



W. De Morgan fecit.

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WILLIAM
DE MORGAN

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND PARENTAGE

1710–1839

THE immediate ancestors of William De Morgan are described as Anglo-Indians, although they were of French descent. Unfortunately Colonel De Morgan, his grandfather, sent all the family documents on board a ship bound for England, called the *Pondicherry*, which went to the bottom; and among the papers which then perished were some of great interest dating prior to the period when the Edict of Nantes forced the Huguenot De Morgans to fly from their native country. The publication of Mrs. Penny's history of Fort St. George recalled to William De Morgan a fact which he had then forgotten, namely that his great-great-grandfather, John De Morgan, was a native-born Frenchman who married a French wife, and that this man's son Augustus, by birth a Frenchman, married a Dane! 'However,' was William's comment, 'we are English enough now!'

There are many Celtic names still to be found with the French prefix in Brittany and Normandy; but the practice of inscribing the 'De' with a capital letter has become distinctive of this particular branch of the De Morgan family. An apparently apocryphal story runs that William's father, the celebrated mathematician, Professor De Morgan, declared emphatically that he was an Englishman, and that if there was, unluckily, a foreign prefix attached to his name, it should be treated as part of the surname. On one occasion Sir John Herschel, writing to him, apologized for enclosing a letter in which the correspondent referred to him as 'the well-known de Morgorgon,' to which the Professor replied:—

'As to the little dees, and Morgorgon, it is not the first time!—My old friend Farish (the Professor's son) could not call me anything else!—It went against his conscience to the day of his death. "*But why is the gentleman not called de Morgorgon?*"—I am constantly tempted to make a mistake in one Greek name because in the second-hand book lists it always comes after mine. Look in any book-list of a miscellaneous character, and you will see the following:—

De Moivre
De Morgan
De Mosthenes.'

The record of the paternal forefathers of William De Morgan, however, as far as this can now be traced, shows them to have been possessed of war-like propensities rather than any inclination towards literature or art. John De Morgan, previously referred to, presumably impoverished by the misfortunes of his family, is supposed to have followed a practice much resorted to at that date by men of birth and education, great numbers of whom entered the service of the East India Company as private soldiers in order to secure what was otherwise almost impossible of attainment—a passage out in the Company's ships; their subsequent objective being to gain a Commission by passing through the ranks. John is said to have dropped the De, which his son afterwards revived, and landing in India July 11, 1710, from on board the *Bouverie*, he became Sergeant in the garrison of Fort St. George. In 1715 he was made Ensign for his bravery in action, and later he became Governor of Forts St. David and Ajengo, occasionally acting in the same capacity at Fort St. George. When he retired in 1748, he was the first military man to be granted a pension for long and distinguished service; and he died, a fine old veteran, in 1760, his burial taking place in Publicat, where his tomb, with its Latin epitaph, may be seen in the quaint Dutch cemetery.

While still an Ensign, John De Morgan had married twice, both wives being French women, but only by the second, Mrs. Turbeville,[1] did he have issue, a family of five daughters and four sons.

The former were perhaps remarkable for the fact that they all married, the eldest three times, and three out of the remaining four twice; so that innumerable descendants soon existed of the veteran, John De Morgan, many of whom likewise gave their services to promote the welfare of the British Empire in India. Of his sons, however, only one survived him, Augustus, born in 1739, who became an officer in the Artillery and married Christina, the Danish lady before mentioned, a daughter of the Rev. Conrade Huttemann.

This young pair were foredoomed to tragedy. Christina died in 1774, and, three months after, her infant son was buried in the same grave in a lonely fort at Ganjam. Four years later, her husband, then aged thirty-nine, with two other officers, was blown up in a battery at the taking of Pondicherry, a name which seemed of ill-omen to his family.

[1] The name, according to the laxity in spelling of those days, is entered variously as Turville and Tivill in the records. John Tivill was 'Chief' of Masulipatam, our first settlement on the coast of India; but property belonging to the Tubervilles, was left in the charge of St. Mary's Vestry, and Mrs. John De Morgan's grandson claimed this property as heir at law, and made good his claim.

A curious story has been told in connexion with Captain De Morgan's death. It is said that, on the morning of the fatal day, he distinctly foretold that he and his two companions would perish in the engagement which was about to take place. Further, so convinced was he of the truth of his prediction, that he made his will which, in confirmation of the tale, bears the date of his decease. This story has been cited as a remarkable instance of the fulfilment of a presentiment, but a little investigation robs it of its uncanny element. The fact was that Captain De Morgan, a clever and observant officer, had noted that the battery which he was to command was unduly exposed owing to its faulty construction. He represented this to the engineer officers and to the Commander-in-Chief without avail; the engineers denied the truth of his statement and the Commander sided with them. So Captain De Morgan went bravely to his death, aware that the engagement must end fatally for himself and his two companions who were posted with him, and in the disaster which occurred his head was severed from his body by a cannon which bore the euphonious name of 'Sweet-lips.' But it was left to his grandson, many years later, to remark what was actually the curious aspect of the story—that a gallant soldier constantly exposed to death, did not consider any danger save a flaw in engineering to be a sufficient reason for making his will!

Of the three sons of that ill-starred couple—the Frenchman Augustus and his Danish wife—two lived to man's estate. Both entered the army; George Augustus, the elder, who was in the Madras Cavalry, took part in an action against Tippoo's troops in 1792, and disappeared. His body was never found, but nothing was ever heard of him subsequently. The other surviving son, John, born in 1772, became an officer in the 22nd Madras Infantry.

This later John, afterwards Colonel De Morgan, while still a lieutenant, married in 1798, in Colombo, Elizabeth Dodson, one of the eleven children and nine daughters of John Dodson of the Custom House, London, and granddaughter of James Dodson, F.R.S., a noted mathematician of his day, author of the *Anti-Logarithm's Canon*.

The untoward fate, however, which at this date dogged the footsteps of the De Morgans, pursued John and Elizabeth. Of their seven children the two eldest when quite young were dispatched to England, in June, 1804, on board the *Prince of Wales*, an East Indiaman. The ship was caught in a storm and wrecked off the Cape, and the two boys presumably perished; but no conclusive proof of their death was ever obtained, any more than had been the case with their uncle, George Augustus; and the uncertainty of their fate always preyed on the mind of their unhappy mother and of the father, who was so soon to follow them.

It was two years after this tragic event, on June 27, 1806,

that Augustus, the fifth child of this couple, and the future celebrated mathematician, was born at Madura, in the Madras Presidency. His father had held Staff appointments at several stations in India, and at the time when his wife was expecting the birth of this son, he chose Madura in preference to Vellore on account of its superior quietness. This choice proved fortunate for himself, as the native troops of the battalion of his regiment, which was at Vellore, mutinied, and in the terrible outbreak which followed, Colonel Fanshawe, who commanded it in his place, was murdered with several other English officers.

Even in the comparative peace of Madura, night after night Colonel De Morgan would creep stealthily out of bed to listen to the conversation of the Sepoys in order to learn if a like fate threatened himself and his helpless wife and children. In consequence of the continued unrest in India, when Augustus was seven months old, his father determined no longer to risk the danger of a residence there for those he loved, and returned to England with his wife, two small daughters, and his infant son. On this decision primarily hinged the fact that the long military record of his family was broken, and that Augustus, and in due course the latter's son, William De Morgan, did not follow the profession to which all their predecessors and most of their contemporary relations belonged, but became instead peaceful civilians.

After settling his family in England—first at Worcester, later in Devonshire, and finally at Taunton, Somersetshire—Colonel De Morgan twice re-visited India. On the last occasion he went to take command of a battalion at Quinton, but two years afterwards, in 1816, he was ordered home on account of ill-health, and a brief record notes that 'he died at sea on board the Company's ship *Larkins* two days after passing the Cape'—not far from the locality where, twelve years previously, his two eldest sons had presumably perished. A rigid Evangelical in tenets and practice—a heritage, doubtless, from his Huguenot ancestry—Colonel De Morgan was known to his fellow officers by the nickname of 'Bible John,' and in a review which appeared shortly after his death he was described as the 'friend of Christianity in India.' In connexion with this phrase, a curious incident occurred forty years afterwards, to which we shall refer later.

Elizabeth De Morgan, left with a young family of four surviving children, appears to have brought them up strictly, but well. To Augustus, her eldest living son, she was devoted, and describes him as a quiet, thoughtful boy, never so well pleased as when he could get her to listen to his reading and explanations, 'always speculating on things that nobody else thought of, and asking her questions far beyond her power to answer'—characteristics which were inherited, in turn, by his own children.

The boy, however, suffered under one great affliction. At birth he had lost the sight of his right eye, owing to the complaint known as 'sore eye' in India, and this proving a handicap to his taking part in active games, doubtless enhanced his natural love of study. He likewise exhibited great musical talent; even as a small child so sensitive was his ear, that a discordant note sounded upon the piano would make him start and shiver as if in pain; and he early learnt to play upon the flute most exquisitely. But, for a time, none seem to have suspected the existence of that other inheritance which was to make him celebrated, neither, apparently, might it have been looked upon with unqualified approval by his relations. His wife relates:—

'From his mother he inherited his musical talent, and probably his mathematical power, for she was the granddaughter of James Dodson, a distinguished mathematician, the friend of Demoivre, and of most of the men of science of his time, and an early F.R.S. But he was Mathematical Master at Christ's Hospital, and some of his descendants seem to have thought this a blot on the scutcheon, for his great-grandson has left on record the impression he had of his ancestor. When quite a boy he asked one of his aunts "who James Dodson was?" and received for answer "*We never cry stinking fish!*" so he was afraid to ask any more questions, but settled that, somehow or other, James Dodson was the "stinking fish of his family," and he had to wait a few years to find out that his great-grandfather was the only one of his immediate ancestors whose name would be held deserving of record.'

The first suspicion of Augustus having inherited the ostensibly reprehensible proclivity of this maternal forbear was due to a mere chance. An old friend of his family, Mr. Hugh Standert, of Taunton, noticed one day that the boy was very busy making a neat figure with ruler and compasses, and finding that the essence of the proposition which was being evolved was supposed to lie in its accurate geometrical drawing, he asked the little lad a few pertinent questions respecting it. Augustus replied that he was *drawing mathematics*. 'That's not mathematics!' said his friend. 'Come, and I will show you what is.' 'So,' relates his wife, 'the lines and angles were rubbed out, and the future mathematician, greatly surprised by finding that he had missed the aim of Euclid, was soon intent on the first demonstration he ever knew the meaning of. I do not think that Mr. Standert was instrumental in further bringing out the latent power; but its owner had become in some degree aware of the mine of wealth that only required working . . . and from that time his great delight was to work out questions which were often as much his own as their solution.'

In this event one recognizes the origin of an incident in one of his son's novels to which we shall refer in due course. Meanwhile it is strange to relate that, although Augustus soon 'read Algebra like a novel,' and 'picked out equations on the School

pew instead of listening to the sermon on Sunday,' the existence of any abnormal mathematical talent remained unsuspected by those who taught him.

In due course he went to Cambridge, where, being of a sociable disposition, he soon became extremely popular. His flute proved an unfailing source of pleasure to his many friends who, we are told, quickly learnt to love him 'for his genial kindness, unwillingness to find fault, and quiet love of fun.' At every turn one recognizes in him the characteristics afterwards conspicuous in his eldest son—the quaint humour, the habit of quiet observation, the love of analysis and tortuous reasoning, of intricate problems and half-facetious solutions in which he seems almost making mock of his own questioning; above all, his complete indifference to the world's opinion combined with an unvarying benevolence of outlook which involved a kindly view of all humanity.

As to his peculiarities, his contemporaries remarked 'his habit of reading through a great part of the night, and in consequence getting up very late the next day, so that his fellow-collegians coming home from a wine-party at four in the morning might find him just going to bed.' Nor were these excursions into literature necessarily of a serious nature. In view of after-events it is interesting to note, 'his insatiable appetite for novel reading, always a great relaxation in his leisure time, and doubtless a useful rest to an over-active brain in the case of one who did not care for riding or boating. Let it be good or bad from a literary point of view, almost any work of fiction was welcome, provided it had plenty of incident and dialogue, and was not over-sentimental. . . . He soon exhausted the stores of the circulating library in Cambridge.' In short, Augustus himself relates: 'I did with Trinity College Library what I afterwards did with my own—I foraged for relaxation. I read an enormous amount of fiction—all I could get hold of, so my amusement was not all philosophical!'

At length came the question of choosing a profession. Augustus was offered a cadetship, but his defective eyesight caused his mother to veto this; and his conscientious inability to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles debarred him from taking Orders. He hesitated between Medicine or the Bar, eventually choosing the latter on his mother's urgent recommendation to 'throw physic to the dogs.' Nevertheless he felt that he had not yet found his true place in the world's workshop, and ere long he gladly seized upon the first opportunity of escaping from a profession which was likewise uncongenial to him.

'About, or before, the year 1820,' relates his wife, 'some liberal-minded men, after long pondering on the disabilities of Jews and Dissenters in gaining a good education, came to the conclusion that as the doors of

the two Universities were closed against them, the difficulty could best be met by establishing a University in which the highest Academical teaching should be given without reference to religious differences. . . . The establishment of University College, called at first the London University, promised to fulfil the hopes of all friends of education, and was hailed as a forerunner of religious freedom.' Mr. De Morgan, whose activity did much to bring this to pass, 'welcomed the opening of the College (in 1826–7) as not only meeting a great want of the time, but as offering himself a prospect of leaving the study of the Law which he did not like for the study and pursuit of Science. When the time came he sent in his name as candidate for the Mathematical Chair.

'It was characteristic that while the momentous decision was going forward on which all his future hinged, the candidate picked up a novel which was lying on the table before him and became so absorbed in its contents that he forgot all beside. The book in question was Miss Porter's *Field of the Forty Footsteps*, and the scene of it is laid in the memorable fields which formed the site of the new College and its surroundings. Augustus had run through the entire volume before the news reached him that, out of thirty-two candidates he, the youngest, had been elected to the coveted post.'

Nevertheless, in thus changing his profession Augustus acted in opposition alike to the wishes of his family, and to those of his many friends who had predicted a brilliant career for him at the Bar, and who regarded his present decision as a regrettable sacrifice on his part. But above his natural inclination for the work involved, he maintained that the 'upholding of a high principle was a more weighty consideration than worldly success or affluence'; and with a cheerful optimism he announced his determination to 'keep to the Sciences so long as they will feed me!'

Before this date, it must be observed, Augustus De Morgan had been recognized, not merely as a leading mathematician, but as a rising young scientist and brilliant logician. It was in this capacity that he made his entry among the circle of those who visited William Frend, likewise a distinguished mathematician, and a man whose remarkable personality may be presumed to have largely influenced that of his descendants, so that we must pause a moment to glance at his antecedents.

William Frend came of a family whose ancestors had been seated at Waltham for many generations, and whose pedigree, with interesting ramifications, dates back to the early fifteenth century. His father, George, however, was a younger son, and in those days it was the fashion to differentiate considerably between the upbringing of the elder and the younger members of a family—to spare no pains in the education of the heir, who was instructed in all the polite arts which might enable him to figure effectively in the great world, while his brothers often received a homely education and were apprenticed to a trade.

Thus George Frend eventually settled in Canterbury in the capacity of banker and wine-merchant, being subsequently twice elected Mayor of that city. But he was a man of high intellectual gifts who was soon recognized by his contemporaries as a scholar and a thinker; while so little was he infected with the spirit of commerce that, when he believed a certain duty on wine to be unjust, he broke open his casks and let the contents run along the streets of Canterbury.

Nevertheless, George Frend at first destined his son for a mercantile profession, and on the lad leaving school sent him to a firm in Quebec with this object. The experiment did not last long; the War of Independence broke out, the youth of sixteen was pressed into the Service, and such was his bravery and gallant bearing that it was desired to retain him in the army; but he preferred the life of a scholar, and journeying back to England begged his father to allow him to enter the Ministry. In 1776, at the age of eighteen, he therefore entered Christ's College, Cambridge, where, for some time, Paley was his tutor. His subsequent career was as brilliant as it was stormy. On taking his degree in 1780, he moved to Jesus College, where he became Fellow and Tutor. He likewise received an offer to proceed to St. Petersburg as tutor to the future Czar Alexander, but he declined this lucrative post, which was afterwards filled by La Harpe. Instead, relates his granddaughter, 'he entered the Church in obedience to the dictates of conscience, though from the same cause he felt constrained to sever his connexion with it later on. He held his incumbency for four years, during which time his religious opinions underwent so great a change that he found it to be his duty to separate himself from the Church at whatever risk to his own prospects and the friendship of those he left behind.'

William Frend soon paid the penalty of an honest expression of his views, and was expelled from his post of College Tutor for his so-called heterodox opinions. Subsequently he became an Actuary, one of the first of that calling, and nine years before the battle of Waterloo he began doing actuarial work for the Rock Insurance Company. He was near fifty when he married Sarah Blackburne, daughter of the Rev. Francis Blackburne, Rector of Brignall, Yorkshire, a lady whose antecedents deserve more than the passing notice which can here be accorded to them. Although a daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England, her traditions in many ways resembled those of her husband. Her grandfather was the famous Archdeacon Blackburne who had issued a publication advocating a more simple pledge at ordination, and who personally refused all further preferment on the grounds that his conscience forbade him to subscribe again. He was of the same family as that romantic personality, Lancelot

Blackburne, the buccaneer Archbishop of York, who is said to have 'gained more hearts than souls';[1] and also of Alice Thornton, daughter of Christopher Wandersworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland, in 1640, whose autobiography, published by the Surtees Society, forms one of the most curious and interesting documents descriptive of the troubled times in which she lived.

What, however, is of greater interest to our present purpose to note is that Sarah Blackburne, although never a professional artist, has left work which shows her to have been possessed of remarkable artistic genius; and presumably from her her grandson that-was-to-be inherited his powers of draughtsmanship.

At the date when Augustus De Morgan first made the acquaintance of William Frend and his family, the Actuary was living in a fine old house adjacent to fields which extended beyond King's Cross. This dwelling, at one time the home of the gentle and pedantic Dr. Isaac Watts, had also, in the seventeenth century, been the residence of Defoe; and in a large oak-panelled room there was a secret doorway and staircase by means of which its once-unquiet occupant used to escape from his political persecutors. During more peaceful days, in happy discussion under the magnificent trees in the lovely old-world garden, Augustus De Morgan first learnt the value of a subsequently treasured friendship. Between himself and the Actuary, though separated in years by half a century, there soon sprang up a strong bond of union. Not only were both keen scientists and eager mathematicians, but both were men of profound religious convictions who had sacrificed worldly success to their love of truth. Both had battled courageously against the system of Religious Tests in matters of education and preferment. Both were men of penetrating intellect, fearless honesty and flawless sincerity. Throughout his life Augustus De Morgan always spoke of William Frend as 'the noblest man he had ever known'—an opinion which seems to have been shared by all who came under the spell of the fine old philosopher.

Long since have vanished the majestic trees beneath which the two scientists then paced; ugly modern buildings have replaced that hospitable house and spacious garden, and the name Defoe Street alone marks the transfigured locality where the home of William Frend once stood. But to the end of his days Augustus De Morgan was destined to cherish a tender recollection of the

[1] In an Edition of Byron's work, 1815, given by Lady Byron to William Frend, there is an interesting account of the Archbishop in a note to *The Corsair*. He bequeathed his sword, a fine Andrea Ferrara, to Archdeacon Blackburne, the great-great-grandfather of William De Morgan, and it was recently presented to the Archbishop's old College, Christ Church, Oxford, by Miss Constance Phillott, William De Morgan's first cousin.

happy hours spent there, for the dawning of romance soon lured his steps again and again to the spot. It is not known at what date there first sprang up an attachment between the young Professor and Sophia, the eldest daughter of William Frend; but the story of their first meeting is best told in her own words :—

'Mr. De Morgan first came to our house with Mr. Stratford [who, like Mr. Frend, was a member of the old Mathematical and subsequently of the Astronomical Society]. He then looked so much older than he was that we were surprised by hearing his real age—just twenty-one. I was nineteen. We soon found out that this "rising man" of whom great things were expected in Science, and who had evidently read so much, could rival us in love of fun, fairy-tales, and ghost-stories, and even showed me a new figure in Cat's Cradle. He was in person very like what he was in later life, but paler, probably from the effects of his recent Cambridge reading. His hair was very thick and curly.'

So congenial a companion proved doubly welcome when he was discovered to be possessed of musical talent, and happy evenings followed when the visitor played on his magic flute, accompanied by Sophia's younger sister—a circumstance calculated to arouse certain pangs of jealousy on the part of the elder girl who, not being a pianist, was relegated to the rôle of listener. Miss Frend, however, as befitted her heritage, was possessed of remarkable character and keen intellect. Her education and upbringing had been wholly unconventional; from her father she had learnt Hebrew, Greek and Latin, while she had developed a deep interest in antiquarian and theological problems. From her earliest childhood, too, she had mixed with the noted people of her day who all flocked to her father's house, forming a strange and heterogeneous gathering of varied professions and denominations. Taylor, the Platonist, and Henry Crabb Robinson, there conversed with Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Brougham. Coleridge, Campbell, Browning, and Wordsworth were frequent visitors, as were both Mrs. Barbauld and Mary Somerville. George Dyer proved a never-failing source of amusement since, as young De Morgan soon pointed out, he 'was a man in whom a want of humour amounted to a positive endowment.' Lamb wrote poems in Sophia's album describing her as his 'lovely Frend'; and Blake, 'a man with a brown coat and uncommonly bright eyes,' Sophia first met when walking out with her father in the Strand when she was ten years old.

'If there is a queer fish in the world,' remarked a conceited Dissenting Minister sarcastically one day before an admiring circle of his parishioners, 'he is certain to find his way to the house of William Frend.'

'Excuse me, sir,' rejoined Sophia demurely, 'but I do not remember our having had the pleasure of seeing you there!'

But amidst the assemblage of noted people of both sexes with

whom she associated, the greatest friend of Sophia's girlhood was Lady Noel Byron, the widow of the poet, a woman whose rare personality aroused among those who knew her intimately something akin to worship, while she remains for others a tragic figure in the glare of the publicity to which her husband's stormy genius exposed her. At that date there was a craze for phrenology, and Sophia, in company with Lady Byron, studied the new science with great seriousness. 'The question of inheritance which lies at the root of the whole,' she wrote many years after, 'had not been entertained and the mysterious problem, the relation of brain to character, was very roughly handled in those days, and does not fare much better now.'

A Mr. Holmes was then giving lectures on the subject in London, and Lady Byron and Sophia attended his classes; whence arose an incident which Sophia relates in her own witty manner.

'Mr. Holmes,' she writes, 'took casts and had a very good collection of these, as well as of the skulls of criminals, idiots, and other abnormalities. The collection was lodged in a house in Bedford Street, Bedford Square. When I first saw them they were used by Mr. Holmes to illustrate his phrenological lectures. After one of these lectures, at which my father, my sisters and I were present, the lecturer pointed out to us some heads which he thought worth observation, as bearing evidence of the agreement of character with form. In going round the room, I descried a cast which I knew. It was that of our friend, Mr. De Morgan, and I had seen it before. . . . The head was on the top tier of a high stand among a choice company of idiots, hydrocephalic people, and the like. I asked the lecturer what was the special characteristic of that individual, and why he had that place.

'"Ah," said Mr. Holmes, shaking his head and looking sorrowful as over a "bootless bene," "that is the head of a man who will never do anything. There is every kind of capacity in this head." He took down the cast and pointed to its proportions. "Wonderful endowments in science, in literature, in every way; but they are all lost."

'"Why so?"

'"There is no power to make them active. The poor weak temperament cannot sustain any continued effort, so the fine organization is quite useless."

'"What a lamentable case!"

'"Aye, indeed. If this individual had a temperament equal to his organization, he would have been a none-such."

'I need not say,' concludes Sophia triumphantly, 'that the prediction was not fulfilled!' Nor did it alarm her, for in 1837, just ten years after she had first met him, she became the wife of the man for whom such a doleful future had been foretold.

After a short tour in Normandy, the young couple settled down at 69 (afterwards 35) Gower Street; and there the bride threw herself with avidity into the varied interests of a busy life. It is impossible here to touch on the numerous schemes for the betterment of mankind which she originated or promoted during the years that followed. She worked hard and brought all the force of her fine intellect to bear upon methods of improving the condition of workhouses, asylums and prisons, in which latter movement she aided Elizabeth Fry. She initiated a Society for providing playgrounds for the children of the slums. She had also a large share in the formation of Bedford College in 1849; and, always an advocate for the higher education of women, she soon persuaded her husband to overcome his masculine prejudices on this subject and to champion the cause of Woman's Suffrage. He did so with a facetious protest.

'We derive evidence of interesting facts from the study of etymology,' he wrote teasingly to her on one occasion. 'For instance, the superiority of the male over the female sex is clearly implied from the fact that when we overcome a difficulty we say we *master* it, but if we fail we say we *miss* it!'

To the many noted acquaintances of Sophia's girlhood were now perforce added her husband's circle of friends, which comprised most of the prominent scientists of the day. Still among the Professor's papers are delightful letters from Sir John Herschel, John Stuart Mill, Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir William Hamilton—who quarrelled and made it up again—and innumerable well-known men of that generation who sought his companionship and were his indefatigable correspondents. William De Morgan in after-life used to speak with amused recollection of 'the circle-squarers and perpetual-motionalists who used to buzz round my father like bluebottle flies!' The Professor's wit, his perspicacity, the wide range of his sympathy, the complete absence of anything pedantic in mind or manner, drew men of every calibre to him with magnetic attraction. 'He was,' we are told, 'a man of great simplicity and vivacity of character, and entirely free from self-interest. He had a love of puns and of all ingenious puzzles and paradoxes which make some of his books, especially his *Budget of Paradoxes*,[1] as amusing as they are learned'; and he had, above all, 'The excess of a lofty sense of honour.'[2]

Besides being a mathematician, Augustus De Morgan was an astronomer, and held the office of Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society for two periods amounting to fourteen years. The Presidency was offered to him, but in declining it, he urged that it should be offered to Sir John Herschel, remarking in characteristic fashion: 'The President must be a man of brass, a micro-

[1] Reprinted from the *Athenæum* after his death in 1872.
[2] *Dictionary of National Biography.*

meter-monger, a telescope-twiddler, a star-stringer, a planet-poker, and a nebula-nabber.'

From the outset of his career, the Professor exhibited a 'thorough contempt for sham knowledge and low aims in study,' and in consequence he hated all competitive examinations. One day he was discovered scribbling down the following :—

Question. What is knowledge?
Answer. A thing to be examined in.
Question. What is the instrument of knowledge?
Answer. A good grinding tutor.
Question. What is the end of knowledge?
Answer. A place in the Civil Service, the Army, the Navy, etc. (as the case may be).
Question. What must those do who would show knowledge?
Answer. Get up subjects and write them out.
Question. What is getting up a subject?
Answer. Learning to write it out.
Question. What is writing out a subject?
Answer. Showing that you have got it up.
And so on, *ad infinitum*.

His definition of an educated man was 'a man who knows something of everything and everything of something,' i.e. a man who is not absolutely ignorant upon any subject, but at the same time is entirely master of one subject.

Of his ready sense of fun the following story is typical. At one time, when there was a great commotion about the frequency of body-snatching for purposes of dissection, some one in his presence read out a paragraph from the daily paper relating to it. Without any preparation, Professor De Morgan, looking up from his book, observed :—

'Should a body want a body
Anatomy to teach,
Should a body snatch a body
Need a body peach?'

One characteristic, however, shared by both husband and wife from the early days of their marriage, deserves special comment because of its bearing upon future events. Mention has been made before of the avidity with which the Professor devoured all works of fiction; and after his marriage he was anxious that his wife should share his enjoyment. 'He liked reading to me,' she relates, 'when he could get anything to please us both, and in this way I heard several of Dickens's novels from the beginning. They came out in monthly parts, and he would say, "We shall have a Pickwick (or whatever it might be) to-morrow"; and on the first day of the publication we had read and commented on it.'

In her husband's Biography, Mrs. De Morgan recounts how, three years after their marriage, a difference arose between

Augustus and herself respecting the exact character intended to be represented in one of the illustrations in *Nicholas Nickleby*. 'The dispute ran so high that it could only be settled by an appeal to head-quarters. Accordingly Professor De Morgan sent a letter to the author from "a lady and gentleman who, being husband and wife, seldom agree about anything, though they are of one mind in admiration of the novel," and begged for a solution of the vexed question. Dickens entered with zest into the spirit of the inquiry, and in an amusing answer declared the husband's opinion to be the correct one; "So," relates Sophia, "he was triumphant and I crestfallen!"'

It was not, however, till many years later that Professor De Morgan first made acquaintance with the author of the books which had given him so much enjoyment. He met Dickens at Broadstairs, at the house of Mr. Knight, the publisher, and Sophia, who was not present at the interview, merely records with regrettable brevity: 'The meeting gave pleasure to both.' Fancy dwells more lingeringly on that happy encounter between the immortal novelist and the brilliant Professor who, little as he then suspected it, was the father of a future novelist whom a later generation would compare to the man before him.

There was another subject on which Augustus and his wife, if not precisely in accord in their conclusions, at least exhibited a common interest which undoubtedly influenced their children. Indeed, so prominent a part did it play in the home-life of the entire family that any attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of that home and ignore this element in it would be singularly incomplete.

Augustus was accredited with being the first man of science in modern times who regarded and studied the phenomena of spiritualism, clairvoyance and telepathy with seriousness. His name is often quoted in this connexion by controversialists of to-day; but while his wife was a whole-hearted convert to a belief in the significance of the phenomena she investigated, it is doubtful whether he did more than weigh the problem with the nicety of an analytical mind; and the attitude adopted by him in regard to such analysis may be defined more explicitly since it was, in the main, that assumed in after-life by his son William.

That certain psychical occurrences are difficult of explanation on any *known* materialistic ground the Professor accepted as evident; but what inference to deduct therefrom, or what their bearing, if any, upon the question of survival and continuity of individuality after death, remained, he felt, undetermined. 'He was convinced of the reality of their occurrence,' states Mrs. De Morgan, 'though he had not satisfied himself as to their cause.' In brief, he was studying forces inexplicable, so far, to science, and he did not on that account deny their actuality; but neither did he lose sight of the boundless credulity of human nature, nor

of the fact that the supernatural of to-day becomes, to-morrow, the superstition of yesterday. His views, however, are best summed up in his inimitable preface to a book on this subject published anonymously by his wife, *From Matter to Spirit, by A.B. and C.D.* In this he weighs and analyses the intricacies of the problem with a subtlety at once humorous and profound, even if, ostensibly, with the bias of a Counsel for the Defence in his desire to please the true author of the book, whose work, though of interest, does not attain to the level of his prelude to it.

We shall see later how William De Morgan affirmed that his father invariably balanced with care the scales between the two eventualities, *possibility* and *probability*. 'We thought,' observed the Professor in a controversy with Farady upon this subject, 'that mature minds were rather inclined to believe that a knowledge of the limits of possibility and impossibility was only the mirage which constantly recedes as we approach.' 'A true ghost story!' exclaimed a chemist once to him, indignantly. 'Why, a ghost, sir, is a physical impossibility!' 'Exactly,' returned the Professor dryly, 'and for that very reason a psychical possibility!' In brief, to the wise, all things are possible and few things proven; while the end of all knowledge is the knowledge of our ignorance.

One of many curious incidents, however, which, occurring under his own observation, made a deep impression on him, was as follows: At a séance one day in 1858, when Mrs. Hayden, a well-known American medium was officiating, he was told that the spirit of his father, Colonel De Morgan, was present. Anxious to put the identity of the 'spirit' to a test which should be known to no one present but himself and the dead man, he suddenly recalled the phrase which had been used in reference to his father forty years before in the review previously referred to, viz., '*the friend of Christianity in India.*' He therefore asked the supposed spirit whether he could remember a certain review published soon after Colonel De Morgan's death, and could give the *initials* of a title in five words, which had therein been applied to the deceased.

The medium and the rest of the company present were seated at the table while the Professor sat apart where they could not see him, holding a pencil with which he pointed to each letter of the alphabet in turn. With the words of the required phrase in his mind, he fully expected a rap to be given by the table when he arrived at the letter F. But his pencil passed the crucial letter, and by the time he came to K he had decided that the test was a failure. Some one present, however, called out, 'You have passed it; I heard a rap long ago.' He therefore began again; and distinct raps came first at C and then at D. He was then more firmly convinced that the test had failed, and consoled

himself humorously with the reflection that, after all, it was rather hard to expect a spirit to remember a passage in an obscure review forty years before! Suddenly, however, it flashed across him that the raps *had indicated correctly the letters which were the commencement of the sentence that contained the title.* 'I see what you are at,' he remarked gravely, 'pray go on.' The raps then proceeded, and in turn again emphasized clearly the following letters: 'C.D.M.T.F.O.C.I.I.' These were the initial letters of the words forming the complete sentence, which ran '*Colonel De Morgan, the friend of Christianity in India.*' 'I was now satisfied,' he said, when referring to the incident afterwards, 'that Something was reading thoughts known only to myself, and which could not have been detected by my method of pointing to the alphabet, even supposing that could have been seen.'[1]

Whether the Professor's own brain could, by a species of telepathy, have conveyed his thoughts to those present on this occasion and unconsciously have suggested their action is a question which may be debated by the curious; meanwhile it should be added that Sophia De Morgan, on her part, had been largely influenced in her attitude towards matters occult by a personal experience during her girlhood. An elderly friend and neighbour of hers having promised to visit her after his death, every night on going to rest, for more than a week after his demise, she was made conscious of his presence by various uncanny tokens; till, in desperation, she changed her room, and fortunately the unenterprising ghost did not follow her to her new apartment.

Other curious occurrences which took place in her own and her husband's family subsequently strengthened her convictions, and one incident carried especial weight. In middle age, Sophia was photographed holding the hand of a medium, and on the photograph being developed, behind her chair appeared a shadowy form which she recognized as that of a dead daughter who had been very dear to her. But the facility of faking an appearance of this sort on the part of a photographer, aided by the predisposition of a bereaved mind to fashion a likeness where none exists, are too well known to require emphasis, and her husband remained more interested in instances of the alleged appearance of the dead to the dying, many curious tales of which he collected and considered; always with the recognition that a scientific explanation of the supposed phenomena might be forthcoming. 'For aught I know,' he wrote on one occasion when questioned about the exact lines of his investigation, 'a body may act where it is not, it may leave consequences behind it. An annihilated

[1] Professor De Morgan refers to this incident in his preface to *From Matter to Spirit*, but, since that work was anonymous, he omits names and many particulars which are given here and serve to render the story more curious.

star, which is seen by light emitted during its existence, may be said, for ought we can tell, to *act where it is not.*'

Nevertheless, such investigations as the husband and wife pursued added an interest to their lives, already so full of mental and physical activity. Although her studies in the occult modified Mrs. De Morgan's religious views so that these became more orthodox in creed, they left unimpaired her broadness of outlook; while, so subtle was the Professor's exposition of this and other matters of controversy, that to this day he is quoted with happy confidence as a Rationalist by the Rationalists, as a Spiritualist by the Spiritualists, and respectively as a Unitarian or a free-thinker by those who like to acclaim him as akin to themselves in thought. Yet in truth he was none of these. Perhaps the nearest definition of his attitude towards religion is summed up in his own description of himself and his family as 'Christians, unattached,' implying that while he accepted the tenets of Christianity, he declined to be relegated to any one particular denomination.

Consistently, with the flight of time the prolonged devotion of his services to the London University remained singularly disinterested, as with his brilliant attainments and influential friends he could have readily secured a far more remunerative post at either of the older Universities. Still more, as the years passed and he became the father of seven children, the inducement to consider material advantages in preference to the quixotic support of an abstract principle might well have overpowered finer considerations. But all the profundities of Science were powerless to destroy the eternal Child in the heart of the Professor. The simplicity and the sincerity of his nature underwent no change. He remained the same unworldly, genial spirit, a veritable Sir Galahad in the cause of Truth, tilting wittily at the foibles and prejudices of his fellow-creatures, and intolerant only of intolerance.

But enough has been said to show the atmosphere in which William De Morgan first saw daylight—an atmosphere of merry wit and exquisite music; of keen logic and piercing thought; of scientific research and—maybe—a leaning towards credulity; of an equally happy appreciation of hard fact and picturesque fiction.

Nearly seventy years after the period with which we have been dealing, when this younger De Morgan had become famous as a novelist, a reviewer, writing of his early life, remarked:—

'When you consider the stimulating influences that were thus around him, forming his character and cultivating his tastes and his temperament throughout his most plastic and susceptible years, and calculate the unique inheritance that must have descended to him from such an ancestry, you begin to recognize that Mr. William De Morgan is no phenomenon, but a natural evolution. His Muse is Mnemosyne, goddess of Memory, mother of all the Muses.'

CHAPTER II

A NURSERY JOURNAL

1842

DESPITE her many and varied interests during the early years of her married life Mrs. De Morgan's chief thought and attention were centred on her young family, whom she tended, educated and chastised with an over-conscientiousness which would astonish a modern parent. Still extant, in her fine pointed writing, is a nursery Journal which she kept with care at her first home in Gower Street at a date when only three of her family of seven had as yet come into existence; and this record of daily peccadilloes, instructions, and corrections, conveys a singularly graphic picture of the little world hedged round by her mother-love, while it is illustrative of the tendency of her generation to attach undue significance to what would now be considered trivialities.

For instance, on one occasion we find her sorely exercised in mind, and devoting many pages of analysis to the fact that her daughter Alice, aged 3¼ years, had made an unimportant statement which was not strictly accurate. The discovery that an imaginative, quick-witted baby had, obviously in all innocence, confused fact and fancy, distressed her grievously, and is treated by her with a gravity out of all proportion to the event. Nevertheless, both in liveliness and minuteness of detail, her writing resembles that of Maria Edgeworth, and suggests whence came the remarkable gift of realistic description developed by her son.

At the date when this Journal was written, her family, as she says, consists of—

Elizabeth Alice De Morgan, born June 4, 1838.

William Frend De Morgan, born November 16, 1839.

And George Campbell De Morgan, born October 16, 1841.

Unfortunately little Alice, 'a sweet and clever, but very excitable child,' being then at an age when her intelligence was naturally in advance of that of her baby brother, 'a dear, gentle child,' perforce comes in for a larger share of her mother's description, and no volume of a later date has survived to

record the quaint, wise questionings of little William when first his active brain began to grapple with the mysteries of existence. Nevertheless Mrs. De Morgan presents us with a vivid picture of a smiling, lovable baby-boy, determined, and already full of individuality, but without the *diablerie* of his highly-strung little sister who, into her nursery days, seemed to pack the emotions and experiences of a life-time. Certain touches, however, amusingly depict the man into which that small babe was destined to grow—the spacious forehead—the portent of which his mother discusses with interest, so abnormal was it as almost to throw the rest of his face out of proportion; the attractive drawl of his speech, which never left him in later years; the retentive memory, of which, even then, his little brain showed remarkable signs; and above all, the sunny, happy temperament, over which the tiny shadows in nursery-land, like the big shadows in after-life, flitted like clouds above a placid pool.

Still absorbed in her studies of phrenology, Mrs. De Morgan observed the formation of her children's heads with anxious attention. Under the date *January*, 1842, she writes:—

'I find it impossible to keep a regular Journal, so this book begins on the beginning of the year with notices of my dear little children. If I were able to do it correctly, I should give the sizes and measurements of each head, but I feel able only to give a slight description of each. . . . William's head is better balanced than Alice's [and she appends a crude illustration to give the relative shape of each]. . . . Willie is now two years and two months. The largest organs in my darling boy's head are:—

Benevolence
Firmness
Adhesiveness
Conscientiousness
Self-esteem
Ideality
The reasoning faculties
Language

The next in size at present are:—

Order
Melody
Caution
Hope
Love of approbation
The drawing faculties

In contradistinction:—

Veneration is *moderate*
Combativeness „ *moderate*
Sensitiveness „ *moderate.*

To those who knew William De Morgan there could not be a more accurate description of his characteristics seventy years later than that compiled by his mother from his phrenology

in babyhood. Even the more negative qualities are curiously accurate in their limitation. Throughout his life his capacity for *veneration* was held in check by his propensity for analysis; his *combativeness*—save in some merry duel of wits—was nil; and his *sensitiveness*—by which it is evident that Mrs. De Morgan meant what in her day was more often termed *sensibility*—a tendency to be unduly affected by the trivialities of existence—this too was counteracted by his singularly happy and equable temperament.

Simple as are the incidents which Sophia De Morgan relates—as must needs be when their subject was but a babe of a couple of summers—they are not without significance to those interested in the eternal truism that the Child is father of the Man. The first peculiarity which she remarks in the small human creature who had so recently learnt to speak is as follows:—

'William has his sister's quick ear for rhythm. Like her he can repeat a great number of verses, particularly his favourites from Wordsworth which I have read to him, and he sometimes gives a poetical effusion extempore. His first rhymes were:—

"Billy sees Clown
A-tumbling down!"

'This evening we were at the piano, and I sang them a little nursery song, the words of which are:—

"Oh, Willy dear, do you love me
As I love you, my sweet baby?
Oh, Willy dear, do you love me,
Do you love me?"

'Without thinking much of the words I had gone on singing, and at the last question I heard very energetically from my little boy: "Yes, Billy *will* love Mama!" Alice, who was on the other side, looked up and trying to screw her face into composure said: "Mama, I can't help my face *coming into tears*. That seems such a sad song (here the tears appeared). Now I will try *to get my face out of tears!*"'

Later she again remarks:—

'Willy's ear for rhythm is very quick. To-day Alice began, "Mama, I love you!"

'"Yes, my dear, I know you do—'You love me and I love you.'"

'Willy, seated upon the hearth-rug, solemnly remarked to himself,—

"When I am old and feeble too
Will you love me as I love you

Presumably this was a quotation from the little song which Mrs. De Morgan before mentioned, but its recital seems to indicate unusual powers of observation and memory in a baby such as the writer's small son was at this date. On another occasion his mother mentions:—

'To-day I was drawing a house for Alice who asked me to put a bow-window in. When it was drawn, Willy observed:—

" A large bow-window in the room
Nearly rested on the ground,
With honey-suckle all in bloom
Shedding its perfume all around." '

Moreover, besides a retentive memory, Willie showed keen powers of observation at this early age of two. His mother relates :—

He has taken a great fancy to the prints of Bewick's Birds. From four to five hours a day the little fellow looks through the book, and can now tell the name of almost every bird. Sometimes he names us all after the birds according to his estimate of our worth.

'You're a Silky Starling, Mama!'

'And what are you, Willie?'

'Oh, I'—humbly—'will be a three-toed Woodpecker

But despite his proclivity for poetry and Natural History, William—or, as he firmly designated himself, *Bill*—seems to have inherited something of the martial ardour of his ancestors :—

'Willie is bent on being a "sozier" [soldier],' remarks his mother; 'however, I do not fear that this fancy will last, unless there is a *hollow* behind his great forehead.'

In contrast to her anxiety, before referred to, that her children as soon as they could lisp should realize the enormity of a lie, Mrs. De Morgan did not suppress more legitimate flights of imagination :—

'When I walked out with the children one day,' she relates, 'I induced Willie to walk instead of being carried, by pretending that we were people travelling through a strange country in which we met all kinds of wild animals, cats were panthers, horses—lions, and dogs—tigers, etc. Janey [the nurse] told me that yesterday they were talking so loud about these beasts that a lady stopped in amazement and looked at them. Willie was in the middle of some history of a tiger running by the carriage when Alice exclaimed—"Look, Bill, here's four giants riding upon them and"—suddenly observing the lady who was looking surprised—"there's a *giantess* standing by!"

'They carry out the "make-believe" principle so far that they sometimes come running out of my room into the nursery looking quite pale and frightened. When asked what is the matter it is sometimes a "peten" [pretence] wolf or a "peten" bear—occasionally a peten Guy Pox; and once when Billy was looking very much alarmed, he answered our inquiries by saying, "I'm frightened of my shadow!"'

Mrs. De Morgan soon found that her children's imagination led them to conclusions entirely unexpected by their prosaic elders. On January 14 she writes :—

'Alice calls the feathery white clouds "the juice of the sky" because I had told her they were wet. She called the fringe I am wearing the "fibres" of my shawl. And she calls the seeds the "eggs of the flowers."

This morning she asked me if the dried African flowers under the glass case were dead, and on my telling her they were, she asked, " Can flowers speak when they are alive ? " It is not surprising that she should have made this mistake, for the Cape flowers are everlasting and look like living flowers, therefore Allie might easily think all gathered flowers were dead.'

The following day she writes :—

' Alice asked me what my grandmama's name was. I told her Blackburne.

' " Was she *black* because she went after the coals, and *burn* because she went after the fire ? "

' " No ! "

' " Where does she live ? "

' " She is not here now ; she went away before you were made ! "

' " Ah—that was because I was so long in coming ! " '

Poor little Alice, however, between her own vivacious temperament and the over-conscientiousness of her mother, was in continual trouble. Small crimes, such as ' wiggling ' in the morning when her nurse brushed her hair, refusing to obey without knowing the precise reason why she was expected to do so, and a little innate spirit of perverseness brought her into sad disaster. Willie, on the contrary, with his almost unvarying sweet temper, remained naturally good :—

' Dear Willie,' the mother relates, ' has *once* been carried to the nursery door for some small act of disobedience, but when he got so far he roared—" Bill won't 'tay ! Bill will be dood boy, Mama ! "—he drawls out the last syllable in an odd manner—Ma*maw* ! '

Only once she relates :—

' Willie, suffering from his teeth, was a little peevish yesterday when they were playing together. I said, " You don't mind it, do you, Allie, dear ? "

' " No," she said patronizingly. " It's his teeth, you know. He's *irribubble* ! "

' " Willie is much better," [she adds, a few days later]. " He has just got a little gambroon dress and cape, trimmed with velvet and with silver buttons and buckle. This looks exceedingly nice and neat ; and Alice and he were greatly delighted with it. I think it gave her as much pleasure to go to the drawer and look at Willie's new dress as if she had one herself." '

Nevertheless William, even in his short experience of life, had already realized the relative values of good and evil. He had noticed that his sister, when naughty, was placed first in the corner of the nursery, and if that was not efficacious, she was then conducted to Mrs. De Morgan's dressing-room, where she was left till solitude and tears had engendered a penitential frame of mind and restored her moral equilibrium. On William being reprimanded one day, therefore, and warned that he must ' be good,' it was observed that he first ran volun-

tarily into a corner and then toddled on his own initiative into his mother's dressing-room, whence he appeared in due course dimpling with smiles all over his chubby face. Inquiries elicited the explanation. He had seen that his sister went into these two places apparently to find the mysterious quality known as her "goodness," and on being told that he was deficient in that same quality, he naturally went to seek for it in the places where she had obviously found it. As an instance of faith-healing this result may be recommended to the curious!

William, nevertheless, had certain clearly defined ideas on the subject of right and wrong. His mother mentions his vehement protest on seeing Punch and Judy for the first time. 'Punch *ought not* to be allowed to beat Judy!' he kept exclaiming, terribly upset at such a perversion of justice; and so distressed was he that all enjoyment of the little farce was impossible to him.

At this date Willie was too young for any religious instruction, but the methods by which Mrs. De Morgan sought to convey to her children some conception of matters theological is illustrated by her conversations with Alice—a child of astonishing precocity and intelligence.

At the age of three-and-a-half Alice was informed by her mother that there was a 'Good Father' whom she had never seen but to whom she owed all that was agreeable in her little life; and thenceforward she prattled glibly about 'my Good Father' in contradistinction to 'my real Papa.' She was also told that it was possible to talk to this 'Good Father' and thank Him for His goodness, although she must not to disconcerted that no audible answer was received.

Alice thereupon requested to be lifted upon the table where she could see the sky that she might talk more readily to the Being who lived beyond it. Her mother pointed out that this attitude was not suitable, and Alice reluctantly acquiesced in the decision; but she was much attracted by the idea of addressing this unseen Presence and used daily to think out a list of benefits for which politely to thank Him.

In May, 1842, the little family party went down to a country house which was constantly lent to them by the friend of Mrs. De Morgan's childhood, Lady Byron. This was Fordhook, once the home of Henry Fielding, and whence, upon a bright June day in 1754, he had driven away on the vain search for health which ended in his untimely death. It was a medium-sized house [1] surrounded by a beautiful garden, which stood on the Uxbridge Road, a little beyond Acton, and nearly opposite

[1] The original house has been pulled down, and a modern one, bearing the same name, built on the site.

the present Ealing Common Station. The happiness of the children at this transition to the country still glows afresh in the faded pages of the Journal, and still between its leaves is pressed a pallid flower gathered in that far-away spring in Lady Byron's garden.

The day on which they started they had first the excitement of the festivities of May Day and its Jacks-in-the-Green, in reference to whom Willie announced his intention of being a sweep when he grew up, and Alice decided she would be the next best thing—a sweep's wife. Then came the drive to their new home with its kaleidoscopic revelation of varying interests; next the wonderment of the arrival at the unknown house with the lovely pleasure grounds—the flowers, the ponies, the cows which, in turn, engaged their attention. Mrs. De Morgan relates:—

'In their prayers to-night they had so much to thank for—sweeps—drive in the carriage—lovely garden—flowers—birds—" *and those beautiful frogs of which one jumped up so, and one stuck out its leg as if it were laughing!*"'

But Alice had a mind far too active and analytical to accept theology with the simple faith of an ordinary child. Her mother has jotted down various conversations on the subject which show unusual thoughtfulness in such a baby. On May 4 she writes:—

'Allie was thinking over her old difficulty of how the clouds were made, and, pursuing her inquiries, she said:—

'" Our Good Father made you and me and the clouds—but I want to know how He came Himself—was *He* born?"

'" No, love, He was not born like us—but I cannot tell you how He came."

'*Alice.* " Well, if He made *us*, some one must have made Him. Was that Another Good Father? and who made that Other?"

'*M.* " You see it is of no use for us to try to find out *how* He came, because if we were to say another Good Father made Him, and another made that Other, still it would be a puzzle to find out how the first Good Father came."

'*A.* " Yes—*the Other of All!*"

'*M.* " Well then, you will believe me when I tell you that it is no use to ask—do you understand?"

'*A.* " Yes—but I should like to know!"'

A few days later Mrs. De Morgan relates:—

'On Alice saying her prayers this evening she said—" What have I to say to-night?—I don't know."

'" You have always something to thank our Good Father for."

'" What to-day?"

'" Not more than usual—unless you thank Him for the peaches."

'" Oh, yes—Willy and I had a peach, and He made it."

'" Yes, He made it and all the fruits that grow."

'*Alice.* "All fruits and trees and men and women and children. Everything but Himself. How *did* He come?—I cannot find out!"

'*M.* "No, you cannot—no one knows how He came."

'*Alice.* "For, you see, He could not make Himself because if He made Himself He must have had *arms* and if they were made He was made before He made Himself, and that could not be, you know."

'*M.* "No, love, we cannot understand it any better than you can."

'*Alice.* "He must have been *always*, yet we are not *always*; we are born. Is it not odd that He never should have begun?"'

But if the problem of the First Cause perplexed the children, not so that of the Personification of Evil. There was a book at Lady Byron's which contained a portrait of the Devil, and Mrs. De Morgan relates:—

'Alice had been very much smitten with this figure before, and had questioned Mrs. Stoker [Lady Byron's housekeeper], who evaded the subject; but Willy said to me to-night:—

'"What's this, Ma—maw? Is he a Monkey, or is he a dog?"

'"No—he's a pretence thing—a sort of Guy Fawkes. (It must be observed that all giants, monsters and make-believes go under the generic name of Guy Fawkes.)

'Alice, who was sitting opposite, drinking her supper, looked up instantly, her eyes sparkling. "What is he, Mama? Is he made of wood?"—she came round to me very quick.

'"Sometimes wooden—sometimes painted; you know those picture figures are made in all kinds of ways."

'"Is he real Guy Faux—has he any other name?"

'"Yes—he is not called 'Guy Faux.'"

'"What is his name, then?" said Will.

'"*Nick!*"

'Here they both laughed excessively, Willie observing—"You *are* funny, Mr. Nick!"

'Alice asked if he had no more names. She seemed to covet something more of the same kind.

'"Yes," I said, "those who think it a better name call him *Scratch*!"

'"Nick and Scratch!! Oh, what fun! Let's find another! We must tell Janey!" etc., etc.

'Their first introduction to the Gentleman in question was productive of much mirth!'

A few days after their arrival at Fordhook the children were given a toy wheelbarrow, which was a great source of excitement to them. Alice, as usual, having been in disgrace for some trifling disobedience, Willy was allowed to play with it first, but she showed no animosity at this decision, indeed the intense affection of the little brother and sister and the unspeakable distress of one if the other was punished affords some of the prettiest descriptions in the book. Nevertheless the new toy at one moment threatened to become a stumbling-block.

May 8.

'Willy quite determined to-day to wheel his wheelbarrow in at the library window. In vain I said, "Willie, you may take your barrow anywhere in the garden, but not in here."

'"But I may."

'"No, indeed, you may *not*. You must do as you are told. Take your barrow out of the window, my boy."

'"No—I will be a man; and I am taking my barrow in here."

'"Then I must shut you and your wheelbarrow up. I think you had better do as I tell you."

'"*No*."

'"Yes. Willie say—'I will,' and do as he is told!"

'"I *will*!—I am taking it out now!"

'And out it went!

'A few minutes afterwards he returned.

'"I am good now, Ma-maw. I am Mr. Walker [the gardener]."

'"What is Mr. Walker to you, Willy?"

'"He is my 'squaintance!"

'"And what is Mrs. Stoker?"

'"My friend. I 'tuppose'"—thoughtfully—"Lady Byron had better be my wife!"

'"Very well—I will tell her!" responded Mrs. De Morgan imperturbably.'

It may be added that Lady Byron reciprocated the admiration which she had evoked; and long years afterwards, when little Bill had grown to be an old man, one of his cherished possessions was still a fragment of a letter from this, his first love, to his mother containing an apt prophecy: 'I am certain your little boy will, in the years to come, be a remarkable man among men.'

Occasionally Lady Byron drove down to Fordhook to visit her guests, bringing with her to their country isolation a supply of books and the latest news from London. 'I remember her vividly,' wrote De Morgan half a century afterwards, 'an almost ethereally delicate, painfully serious, disconcertingly precise lady. The word *stoical* associates itself in my mind with Lady Noel Byron—not implying severity or grimness, but the tragedy of her life had left its mark upon her.' Nevertheless Lady Byron was gifted with a sense of humour, and on one of these visits she related graphically to Mrs. De Morgan how Lady Lytton had been annoying her husband, Sir Bulwer Lytton, by sending letters to him at his club addressed to 'Sir Liar Lytton!' What, however, interested the younger members of the family more keenly was that on these excursions their hostess was usually accompanied by her grandson Ralph, afterwards second Earl of Lovelace, who was four months older than little Willie, and ever after remained his lifelong friend.

Meanwhile the housekeeper in charge at Fordhook, Mrs. Stoker, was not regarded by Willie in such a favourable light as was his projected 'wife.'

'A few days ago,' writes Mrs. De Morgan, 'Mrs. Stoker was in the dining-room when Willie was eating his breakfast.

'Willie cannot bear to have anyone present at meals who is not eating, so, to give her a polite hint, he sat still and did not taste his food. Janey asked him why he did not eat, saying—"Are you not hungry, Willie?"

'"Ye-s."

'"Then why do you not eat?"

'He only replied by gravely stirring about his bread and milk, and when Janey begged him to eat it before it was cold, he looked at Mrs. Stoker saying—"*You* dine when Mama dines!" She took the hint and left him.

'Another day at breakfast, she, knowing his fancy, said—"Willie, shall I stay with you?" (He was alone, the others were not yet come to breakfast, and Mary [the second nurse] had left the room for a minute.)

'"Ye-s," replied Willie, "you may stay till Mary comes back."

'When Mary returned, Willie said politely to Mrs. Stoker,—

'"Now Mary *is* come."

Willy's superior good temper, however, was a source of pathetic envy to his restless, vivacious, little sister.

Alice. 'Mama, I wish I was not so contrairy.'

M. 'Well, love, you will teach yourself in time not to be so.'

Alice. 'Willy is good always.'

M. 'Not quite always—but on the whole he is a dear good little boy.'

Alice. 'He was born good—I wonder why I wasn't born good too. It was wrong in our Good Father—He ought to have borned me good too, ought not He?'

M. 'No—I do not think what He does is ever wrong. We cannot always tell *why* He does things different to what we wish, but we can know that if you had been born quite good, you would not have had the pleasure of conquering your naughtiness and of pleasing Him that way.'

Alice. 'Then it was right in Him. *He done it to give me a job!*'

Long years afterwards William De Morgan used to probe back with interest into his baby recollection of Fordhook. 'I wish every one who leaves a house would seal up in a bottle a short account of their experiences there and bury it in the foundations!' he said in this connexion. 'What an enthralling record it would make for those who come after!'

The Professor was seldom able to accompany his family on their holidays, but his charming letters to his children have still survived, decorated profusely with attractive beasts, monsters and dragons—obviously the ancestors of the bogies with which his little son in the future was to adorn his famous pottery.

But the Professor's bogies all served to inculcate the moral precept '*be good*,' particularly in the case of vivacious little Alice, for as the years passed the precocity of her intelligence gave some anxiety to her parents, and in conversations with her father she displayed a tendency to such close metaphysical

reasoning that he held it imperative to check the workings of her too-eager brain.

'My eldest little girl,' he wrote in 1847, 'gave alarming symptoms of being a prodigy, but I so effectually counteracted them that her mother began in her turn to be alarmed when she was between six and seven years old lest she should be backward in her learning. She is now between nine and ten, and frequently puzzles me with words which I am to make out with the ivory letters which have been, and are, a source of amusement to us all. It is by these letters that they have all learnt—boys as well as girls—and the youngest now makes a small sentence with them from her book when she has a morning lesson—which is not every day. No spelling-book has been used; and I abominate the system of daily tasks and getting so many words to spell by heart. As to a grammar, they shall never learn one, nor be troubled with the false notions it contains.'

This sentence hints at the system of education pursued by the Professor and his wife. The mental training of their children, in small matters as in great, was as unconventional as the moral training was rigid: they held that the minds of the young must be allowed full elasticity, their manners none. The result was a curious admixture of freedom of thought and outlook far in advance of the date at which they lived, combined with notions of conduct which even then were held to be unduly strict and old-fashioned.

But little Alice, with her fearless questioning of Life's many mysteries, was destined all too early to learn the answer to the riddles which perplexed her. At the age of fifteen a chill sufficed to develop the family scourge—consumption; and soon all that was left to recall her once-bright personality was the photograph before referred to with its hint of a shadowy Presence—which at least bespoke an abiding hope in her mother's heart.

George Campbell, too, the three-months-old baby of the 'Nursery Journal'—'with a head more wonderful than William's'—and who afterwards showed that he had inherited his father's mathematical powers—he likewise was fated to die in the dawn of a promising manhood, a victim to the same disease which wrought such dire havoc amongst his family.

But William battled successfully with the constitutional delicacy which threatened him all his life. He, as his mother relates in that early Journal, grew 'tall and pale,' and by and by attained to man's estate to develop faculties which even her phrenology had never dreamed of.

In the minds of children, however, trivialities take root abidingly, while the bigger events of existence fade into nothingness; and there were three pictures of his early days which always dwelt in the recollection of William De Morgan

so that he recalled them as a septuagenarian. One was as follows:—

He was still a tiny child—oh! so tiny—though he could not measure the exact span of his little life, when one day he was playing and laughing in his father's garden. And suddenly, in the middle of a romp, he planted his foot upon a wee sapling growing there, and looking down he saw that the little plant which had been so pretty a moment before lay trampled in the earth, bruised and snapped off an inch from the ground. And a lifetime afterwards he could recall how the scolding he received for his awkwardness was nothing to him compared with the anguish in his little heart at his unintentional cruelty, or how he went about afterwards feeling as though the brand of Cain were upon his brow when he thought of the beautiful tree which that sapling would have become but for his murderous tread. 'But,' he remarked as an old man, 'if the censorious spirit that I aroused could have foreseen the tree that was to grow from the forgotten residuum of the accident, the root that it left in the ground, it would not perhaps have passed such a sweeping judgment.' For he lived to see a magnificent giant spring from that little crushed sprig—'A tree,' he would say with delighted satisfaction, 'which you can see to-day from the very end of the street!'

Another recollection was as follows: He was taken by his mother to Mudie's Library to change some books. A little lad, just able to peer over the counter, he stood with his chin resting on the woodwork and gazed fascinated at the vista of enticing volumes reaching far away into a distance which he could not penetrate. Then he saw a tall gentleman step out from the back of the shop and hand his mother a three-volume novel. 'That,' whispered Mrs. De Morgan, as they walked away, 'was Mr. Mudie!' And sixty-six years afterwards the elderly gentleman into which that small boy had developed, as the guest of the evening at a large gathering of authors, recalled the thrill of delighted awe which those words had sent through him as a lad when he understood that he had seen the King of Librarians, the guardian of untold treasures! 'How funny,' he added in conclusion, 'if Mr. Mudie could have looked forward and seen *my* future!'

A third impression from his childhood followed him to the end of his days. 'Did you ever when a child have the map-fever?' he wrote; 'I mean the passion for poring over maps, gloating over the lakes and mountains, building imaginary towns to suit their names, catching imaginary fish in the rivers, and chasing incredible wild beasts in the forests—such forests—my word! It exists, this passion, and it rose to fever-point with me at ten or twelve years of age, in connexion with ar.

enthralling series of maps of America, under the stimulus of early experience of Fenimore Cooper and Catlin's *North American Indians.*' Never, all through his life, could he hear a musical Indian name without the old glamour rushing back upon him; never could he think of America without peering back wistfully into that magic dreamland of his boyhood. 'It ceases for me to be a huge congeries of millionaires and Tammany and Trusts and nigger-lynching and minute print—a land where one takes one's telephone to bed with one and rings one's friends up every half-hour of the night. It becomes again the land Columbus found, good for youth's fetterless imagination to run riot in': a land of eternal adventure, of inexhaustible exploration, of hairbreadth escapes from which one will always emerge triumphantly—for otherwise would not the story come to an end? And that is unthinkable with all life before one! For those ancient maps over which the little lad had pored depicted a roadless wild filled with tribes of delightful aborigines long since improved out of existence—either dead as the Past to which they belonged, or transformed into gentlemen of intelligence studying at Universities. . . . 'And now,' De Morgan concluded in his retrospect, 'sixty years have passed, and the Indian tribes are a name, and all the dream and the romance have vanished, and folk write letters to me—even to me—from the very places where "The Savage drank his enemies' blood," and their letters are all about . . . my books Curious!'

Pencil Sketch by William De Morgan.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD MAN'S YOUTH

1842–1872

WRITING in 1914, William De Morgan summed up the chief landmarks of his early years as follows :—

'I was born in Gower Street (No. 69) and resided there—if an infant resides—till my fourth birthday, November 16, 1843. I can recollect it! In the spring or summer of 1844, my father moved to No. 7 Camden Street (afterwards Miss Buss's School, or College). I went to the University College School at ten years old, I believe in 1848—probably at the opening of the session. I was there till sixteen, when I went into the College. In that year my father left Camden Street for 41 Charlcot Villas, Adelaide Road (afterwards 91 Adelaide Road). I then began Art at Cary's in Streatham Street, Bloomsbury. I remained at College till nineteen, and was then admitted to the Academy Schools in 1859.'

Necessarily throughout these years the choice of a place of residence by his parents was always dictated by its accessibility to the London University, this being essential alike to the Professor and his children. Meanwhile to the latter certain recollections became indissolubly connected with each of their successive homes.

In Gower Street the mother of Charles Dickens, in days of dire poverty, had striven to start a boarding-school; and almost daily little William used to pass the house which became dimly associated in his mind with the name of the novelist which he was always hearing—the man who throughout England had recently become a household god. In Camden Street, where were subsequently spent sixteen of the most impressionable years of his life, the atmosphere of his surroundings may be traced in his own work half a century afterwards. It is not difficult to imagine that the many poor and thickly tenanted slums in the vicinity of the better houses there made a deep impression on the boy's imagination as he took a short cut home daily through these purlieus and caught snatches of the queer talk of their teeming inhabitants; while exactly opposite his father's house stood an odd little Nonconformist chapel, which has only recently been pulled down to make way for a County Council

school, and which was surely once presided over by Joey Vance's pet aversion—Mr. Capstick of Hell-fire fame? It was in Camden Street that William's three younger sisters were born, and there bright little Alice breathed her last. And it was there also that his sister Chrissy when a small girl, being of more orthodox persuasion than the rest of the family, and perturbed because William had not been christened, solemnly baptized him one day out of a slop-basin!

It was in connexion with this home too that he always used to remark one curious coincidence later in life. For always before some great crisis, and invariably before a death in his family, he had a vivid dream of this Camden Street house There was nothing particularly remarkable about the dream, apart from its sequel. It was just a resuscitation of ordinary, homely events in that bygone life, realistic in its sheer triviality; but it was so inevitably followed by disaster, usually bereavement, that he came first to remark and then to dread its recurrence.

Adelaide Road, when his parents removed to it, was almost like a country home, for it was surrounded by fields. At the date of this transition, William had attended the College School for six years, and he now first began to take the lessons in drawing to which he refers. To the present generation it may be necessary to explain that Francis Stephen Cary, to whose old school in Bloomsbury he went, was from 1842 for thirty-two years a well-known Art teacher, and was himself the younger son of a vicar celebrated for his writings, and particularly for his translation of Dante's *Inferno*, published in 1805. No sooner did William begin to study under this tuition, than he began to dream dreams about his future in life; and in the last book which he gave to the world, many passages of which are autobiographical, he thus refers to his misguided choice of a profession, when a boy of fifteen.

'Another landmark which had painful consequences for me in after life was my discovery that I had a genius for the Fine Arts. This pernicious idea would never have crossed my mind if a school-fellow of mine named Jacox had not had another idea equally pernicious, that he had a genius for Satire. This idea fructified in Room K, under circumstances as follows.'

And after describing how he had made a crude sketch of the Farnese Hercules, and how Jacox, looking over his shoulder, remarked cynically, "*You* know how to draw, and no mistake!" he says:—

'I perceive now that it is too late—near sixty years too late!—that he was, according to his lights, satirical. He had justification, however, in the widely spread belief that an exaggerated over-statement of the contrary is an effective form of ridicule. What he wished to convey was that I did *not* know how to draw, and probably never should. I doubt

if I was able at that time to conceive myself incapable of anything, and I accepted his encomium seriously. . . . If he had only put his tongue ever so gently in his cheek!'

In this simple fashion the die was cast. On his way home the boy in the story—as probably did the boy in real life—bought 'cartridge paper and a threepenny BB pencil, and a piece of india-rubber of the period,' which he promptly 'put to thaw' in his breeches pocket; and directly he got indoors he spread out his cartridge paper proudly and drew upon it Prometheus attacked by a vulture whose wings spread all across the paper. He had the sense to be dissatisfied with this effort, and tore it up; but an officious sister rescued the fragments from the dustbin where they had been cast, and piecing them together, subsequently claimed enthusiastically for the mutilated work of Art the admiration of all to whom she showed it. Thus, in the story, was accomplished the gradual self-deception of the youthful aspirant to genius, and his final undoing, since his talent was conspicuous only by its absence.

How far all this is to be taken as literally true is immaterial; what is of interest is that the writer, reviewing a far-distant Past, saw how the Destiny of a life invariably hinges on some unimportant incident scarcely noticed at the time of its happening. From that point onwards he describes faithfully and relentlessly the failure of his own early attempts at painting; the misleading applause which at first egged him on to a false estimate of his powers; the judicial platitudes of the great artist who was pressed for an opinion respecting his incapacity; even the social side of the question as it appeared in his day is dealt with in a vein of deft and delicate sarcasm. Above all, the inanity which directs the public taste in the fashion of Art—so-called—and the type of artists—so-called—who prey upon that inanity, alike come in for a measure of his laughing scorn.

There is a delightful description of the Professor disguised as the perplexed father of his hero striving to arrive at some just estimate in regard to the situation created by his son's sudden predilection for High Art. Stow, an Art auctioneer, and partner to a large firm of Art dealers, is appealed to for his views on the drawings which the juvenile artist has produced:—

'"Keep to the point," [urged the father]: "if one of your boys thought he could do Art, would you let him?"

'"Let him be an Artist?—Why—certainly! if he showed ability. If people bought his pictures, why shouldn't he make his living that way?"

'"That brings us to the point. Do you see any reason, from these drawings, to suppose that anyone will ever want to buy my boy's pictures?"

' " That can be settled by trying the experiment. Teach him to paint pictures, and see if anyone buys them. He can be taught in three or four years if he's tractable. I fancy—I tell you I don't know—that there's nothing in these drawings to show that he won't be able to paint pictures. Rather t'other way, I should say. When they are painted, we shall soon see if anyone wants them."

' " I am completely puzzled," said my father. And indeed he looked so. " Do you mean to say, Scritchey," he continued after a moment, " that there is no such thing as an absolutely good or bad picture—that it is entirely a matter of fashion ? "

' " Selling is entirely a matter of fashion. Good pictures are pictures that sell. Bad pictures are pictures that don't. There may be people that know good pictures from bad, but all I can say is they keep outside auction-rooms."

' " Then Master Jackey may still have a chance, however badly he paints ? "

' " Rather. You come to the Mart some day when a big sale's on and see if what I say isn't true."

' " But I shall not know good from bad myself."

" ' Oh, dear—yes, you will ! Everybody does ! "

' " Doesn't that contradict what you said before ? "

' " Of course it does, flatly. But what I said before didn't mean that nobody knew good from bad, and that nobody could prove anything either way. Everybody knows, but then unless he praises what other people think rubbish, nobody will credit him with a higher form of knowledge than his own, and that's the sort of fame bounce grows fat upon. Believe me, dear Strap, that there is a factor in Art of more importance than correct drawing or dignified composition or striking chiaroscuro or vigorous impasto, and that is . . ." Mr Stowe dropped his voice to a whisper on his last word " *humbug* ! " '

In regard to the social side of the question at that date, a fictitious stepmother is his mouthpiece :—

' I have sometimes thought very leniently of my stepmother for her share in hurrying me on to destruction. Because although she conceded to me abstract ability of a high order—and we must remember that it was as much as one's life is worth to attempt to stem High Art—so long as no question was raised of its adoption as a profession, yet as soon as a murmur of Destiny was reported to the effect that I was " going to be " an artist, she took up her parable on the score of Caste, and denounced Art the profession, however high on the slopes of Parnassus, as socially low, and altogether unsuited for the son of a gentleman. For, strange as it seems now to tell it, there were still, in the 'fifties, persons in Society who grudged admission to its sacred precinct to every Art but Literature. The élite—so said a gospel that had survived from the last age but one—might be amateurs, like Count d'Orsay, but not professionals. And this gospel was preached with the greatest vigour by persons on Society's outskirts, who indeed are apt to take up the cudgels in defence of its citadel even while the garrison is contemplating all sorts of concessions to the enemy.'

None the less, in spite of the absurdity of some of the barriers which were placed in the way of his boyish ambition, the sound common sense of his father put a decisive, if temporary, veto upon its fulfilment.

' My father,' he relates, ' put his foot down firmly on every attempt

to bring the fine Arts into the arena of serious discussion as a profession for his son, until I had finished my course at school, and attended lectures for at least a year at the College. Even with that delay I should still be short of nineteen—scarcely old enough to make the choice of a profession compulsory.'

It must have been about the date of this early initiation into Art, that William, presumably a boy of sixteen, went with one of his fellow students from Cary's to spend a brief holiday at Lynton. Whaite, this new friend, was evidently the original of 'Opkins in *The Old Man's Youth*; and presumably the following fragment of a letter which describes their visit escaped the destruction which overtook the rest of it solely out of respect for the illustration of Mrs. Bale, the landlady, with which it is adorned.

William De Morgan to his Mother.

'WATERLOO HOUSE,
'LYNTON,
'[*Undated.*]

'MY DEAR MOTHER,—

'This person is Mrs. Bale, our landlady, who may be a very excellent person, but who doesn't look the character. This place (Waterloo House) is as I told you a regular do, and will be left by us to-morrow. We have found a very good place in Lynmouth close by the waterside, where our expenses will be, I should think, very close indeed to what I put them at.

'It has rained incessantly throughout to-day, which has made it impossible to begin any real work, or indeed almost any work at all, for I could neither go out of doors to work, nor find anyone out of doors to bring in to work from. However, stretching canvasses and sheets of paper, and trying to draw from the window, and drawing little humbugs out of my own head, has (or have) occupied me all day. This won't happen when I have a connexion among the populace, and am able to get at the folks to paint them. By the way, we shall have at our next lodgings a very decent sitting-room big enough to paint in.

'Whaite is a very pleasant man to be with. He is uncommonly Manchester, and spills the human H about the floor copiously. Likewise when he begins to laugh he never stops. And that is all about him.

'All except very fine days I shall be indoors working. Lynton would be quite the worst place in the world for you. I think the climate would be bad and the climb-it worse. Lynton is just above Lynmouth—that is four hundred feet up—and the ascent is quite as steep as the most active person would wish it to be. It is quite as bad as anything at Penmaenmawr, but rather close and muggy and shut in by trees, and I think you had better stick to Wales. . . .

'I passed in the coach through Lord Lovelace's estate.'

(The rest of the letter is lost.)

From the University School, William passed into University College, where he remained for three years, and where a con-

temporary relates 'he distinguished himself as a scholar, though the bent of his mind was always towards science.' It is still recollected how, during the lectures which took place, both William and his father were invariably to be seen drawing busily, sometimes, it appeared, unconsciously, so that caricatures, jests, or hobgoblins of weird appearance, 'little humbugs,' were always to be found scrawled upon every scrap of paper that had been within their reach. Another taste young De Morgan shared with his father was that, although he showed no love for mathematics, he always maintained that 'Euclid, Book I, is the most entrancing novel in literature.' His own views, however, about his life at the University are of peculiar interest.

'I think my father's imagination was misled by the word College. He could not dissociate it from his old University life, with its intoxicating traditions of ancient learning, its freedom of sacred precincts where every stone brings back its memories of bygone scholars; its great silent libraries whose peace alone is stimulus enough to make an otherwise bookless man read out the day and part reluctantly in the end with the quarto or folio he never would have looked at elsewhere. He had never known how much of his own love of the classics was due to the associations of the spot where they had reached his soul, and he fancied that his son too might be bitten with the love of Literature; or, it may be, of the practice of thinking—mathematical and scientific thinking—by the surroundings of a College. But, honestly as I believe that there was not in the world, in my time, a sounder curriculum of learning than the one he offered me, it had one defect. There was nothing in the places of study, in their antecedents and surroundings, to catch and hold the imagination of a crude boy, who, behind his many faults—which I do not think my words conceal—had one prominent impulse of the mind, which was ready to grasp good or evil, truth or falsehood, according to the garb it came in. My year of College life—in no sense Collegiate life—placed the banquet of learning before me ungarnished and colourless, and my father wondered why the dishes that had tempted his intellectual palate in the library of the gardens of Peterhouse should be tasteless to his son's in Gower Street. Surely a College is a College, wherever chance has placed it. He attached no weight whatever to University residence, as against home and daily attendance. Of what disadvantage was it to a studious youth to be shut out of his College after hours? Would any amount of gating make study acceptable to an unstudious one?—No—it was manifestly my aversion to letters, developed as soon as application to them became optional; for that was a condition precedent of College manhood, no longer schoolboy-hood.'

Thus William, finding no appeal to his imagination in the prosaic surroundings of the Gower Street University, turned more determinedly to the vision of Art which attracted and teased him. The desire for creation, the craving for self-expression which is a complement of all intelligent Youth, was in him a living force which fought to find an outlet and, at first, sped into the wrong channel. There is a typical letter from his father to him belonging to this juncture, on which pencilled comments are added in the recipient's handwriting.

THE THREE SONS OF PROFESSOR DE MORGAN
From left to right—Edward, William and George

Professor De Morgan to William De Morgan.

'7 CAMDEN STREET, N.W.,
'*August* 24, 1858.

'DEAR WILLY,—

'Now that you have fairly left College, it is time to ask yourself whether you have really made up your mind as to your profession—and if so, whether you have chosen wisely. I have never interfered, because I cared little what you thought at seventeen and eighteen.

'Do you really think that you are so likely to adhere to the choice you think you have made as to make it worth while to spend more time upon it? [In pencil, in William's handwriting, *Yes.*]

'Have you considered your chance of success with any other eyes but your own? Would it not be worth while to take the opinion of some persons who have no partiality towards you as to your chances.

'Have you considered other things as to how you should like them?

'Are you fully aware of the lottery character of the profession of an artist?

'Do you know that it is a life subject to very keen mortifications. [In William's writing—*Blow that!*]

'Do you know that the preparation for it is very hard labour? That you must work many hours a day for years and years?

[In William's writing—*The same may be said of any profession in which one may become an honourable and independent individual.*]

'Think this over for a fortnight and give me an answer. If, after perfect deliberation, you make up your mind to go on, well and good. But you cannot easily give too much thought to what I have put before you.

'Give me no answer for a fortnight at least. But even if you wait till you come here give it me in writing.

'Your affectionate Father,
'A. DE MORGAN.'

['Endorsed in William's writing—*Received Wednesday, August* 25, '58.']

The answer to this letter has not survived, but what its gist must have been is apparent. 'My father's feeble opposition to my wishes had to disappear,' William relates, 'though I do not believe he was ever convinced; he was far too sensible for that! I fancy he consoled himself with the reflection that I was still so young that a year or so spent in demonstrating my incompetence for Art could be well spared.' None the less it is curious to find that the Professor with his shrewd insight appears to have realized one course in which his son's immature genius might be successfully directed. 'My father,' wrote William nearly half a century afterwards, 'never gave me but one strong piece of advice about my profession, and I disregarded it at the dictates of a boyish vanity. He told me to *read hard, especially the classics, and I should one day write well.* But I must needs "be an artist."'

So, in his twentieth year, William entered the Academy Schools, which he describes as follows:—

'Another forty years and the memory of the old Academy Schools will linger only in a few old, old noddles for a while—a short while—and

will flicker out at the very last in the brain of some centenarian. Burlington House was still a decade ahead in my day; and the Schools, out of the Exhibition time, were in the Exhibition Rooms. The way in was under the right hand entry, and there was a door on each side. On the left, to the Schools; on the right, to the Library. I am writing it down to recall it to myself. I think it must have been in the autumn of fifty-seven [sic] that I entered that door on the left. Can I blame it, that when I did so *lasciavo ogni speranza*—left behind me, that is, every hope of becoming a useful member of society? Not every hope of coming out again, for I came out to lunch.'

With graphic touch he describes his disillusionment:—

'As for those I saw drawing—probates, I suppose, as they had passed through successfully—I was strongly impressed with the persistency with which they gazed on their own work, glancing occasionally at its original for comparison. Now and then, rarely, as a fly occasionally touches the surface of a still pool, the point of a crayon or the bustle of a stump touched the surface of a drawing. The serene contemplation of achievement, which filled the gaps between the touches, set thought on the alert to determine when the drawings were actually executed; a task before which thought reeled and staggered speechless. A fair percentage of these matured students seemed morally degenerate—more reprobates than probates—passing their time in the exchange of repartees, the comparison of the beauty of actresses, or reminiscences of theatrical tit-bits.'

Nowhere did the young Art student see the earnest striving after Attainment which his inexperience had depicted. On the contrary,—

'My recollection is well supplied with dissolute and vicious units who made up for sheer incapacity, or strong disposition to leave off work at the point at which difficulty begins, by audacious attitudinizing and wholesale quackery. The wonder of it to me has been that such men have been so often taken at their own valuation, and have been worked up by dealerdom, and written up by the press, until any attempt to accelerate the natural gravitation of their "work" towards Oblivion would only cause a recrudescence of their spurious fame, and defeat its own object.

'I was not qualified for a mountebank by nature, and should never have scored a success on those lines. So I never became a Real Artist.'

In life if we are strong we mould Circumstance; if we are weak it moulds us. So William De Morgan, taking the measure of the charlatans in his profession, found his own truth intensified. So, too, with unflinching courage, he accepted his own limitations and rebounded from the recognition braced to novel effort. It must here be remarked as curious that, so long as he attempted to paint on conventional lines, so long was his work redeemed only from mediocrity by a certain quaintness of expression; but even to the untrained eye, it was anatomically uncertain, stiff in outline, and somewhat hard in colour. No sooner, however, as we shall see later, did he give free rein

to his imagination than the beauty of line developed and his fine draughtsmanship became apparent, as did the mingled originality, humour and facile execution which enhanced the decorative quality of his work.

None the less, the scientific trend of his mind made itself felt even during this stereotyped artistic training. It was impossible for him to travel far along any beaten track. He was for ever trying fresh experiments with pigments, thinking out processes which might more effectually achieve some result at which he aimed. Still more, his love of mechanical invention crossed and warred with the visionary element in his nature. His thoughts were constantly caught in a mesh of intricate problems connected with some discovery of practical utility. 'I know of nothing like invention to make life palatable!' long years afterwards he represented his hero Joseph Vance saying. Even so, the surprising versatility of his powers did not, as is usual with a nature which is many-sided, out of its very diffuseness, involve a corresponding superficiality. In his early career, as to the last day of his life, his mastery of technical knowledge on any subject which he tackled was remarkable. There was only one matter on which, to the end of his days, he preserved the ignorance and the simplicity of a child—and that was the subject of finance. Money—the coining and the keeping of it—did not enter into his scheme of life, save only in so far as its absence crippled his mental output.

At this date, as one of a family of six, the son and grandson of men who had eschewed all worldly advantage, William De Morgan had little money and small prospect of more coming to him; moreover he had obstinately chosen a profession which was not likely to prove remunerative. Yet he faced life with a happy irresponsibility, his lips full of quips and his mind full of problems, while his whole being radiated a cheery Bohemianism all his own. 'He was, however, never talkative, except to his intimates,' related Sir William Richmond; and in these early days he became known to his friends by the nickname of 'the Mouse,' partly on account of his being so quiet, partly because of the abnormal development of his forehead in contrast with the smallness of his features. Good-looking, tall and slight—an almost boyish slenderness never left him throughout his life—his face presented something of an enigma to the curious, with its bright, alert expression, its crowning mass of chestnut hair, and the remarkable brow—full of a promise which the years were to fulfil. He would sit silent, apparently indifferent to a conversation going on around him, but all the while absorbing impressions into the store-house of a memory which was to be rich in result half a lifetime afterwards. At

some unexpected juncture, however, he would abruptly launch into the conversation an absurd comment, the humour of which it is impossible to reproduce on paper, since so much of its quaintness lay in the manner of its utterance—the attractive, high-pitched drawl which his mother had remarked in babyhood, and which to all who knew him was so much a part of his individuality that they never cease to hear it, instinct with life, still speaking from his books.

Even when a man has drifted from youth to age, the essential characteristics of his physiognomy survive the more ephemeral changes wrought by Time. Thus a description of William De Morgan's appearance as a septuagenarian, written by Mr. Bram Stoker, is not inappropriate to quote here. Writing in 1908 Mr. Stoker says:—

'William Frend De Morgan has a most interesting physical personality. Let me describe him: He is in height about six feet, though this now seems lessened somewhat by his tale of years. He is of slight build with shoulders square. His head is well balanced on a fairly long neck; sign of high type. It is well shaped; very wide and full behind the ears, with bold forehead wide between the ridges which phrenologists call the "bumps of imagination." These manifestations are sufficiently marked as to be well noteworthy. The top of the forehead rises in a steep ridge of bone, manifestly of considerable strength, for it once resisted, without evil effect collaterally, a blow from the swing-back of a heavy door which stripped away the skin. The frontal sinuses are not strongly marked. The eyebrows are fairly thick. The nose is a delicate aquiline as to its ridge, with the tip slightly pointed and drooping, and with long, though not wide, nostrils. The chin is somewhat pointed, and the jaws are rather narrow than wide. The eyes are blue-grey and of good size. The ears are small and delicate. The mouth is medium; straight and not long, with lips rather thin than thick.

'His hand is characteristic; the fine, dexterous, sensitive hand of an artist skilled in plastic work. The palm is wide. The fingers are long and fine; very little webbed at the joining the palm. They are pointed at the tips, but—strange to say with regard to an art-worker—hardly spatulated at all. The whole of the inner side of the hand is wrinkled and lined in a remarkable way. He has a strange story to tell of a prediction based on the lines of his hand made long ago. . . .'

This story is as follows:—

About the age of twenty, he went to a soothsayer to have his fortune told. The man, looking at his palm, appeared astonished, and exclaimed that the hand was a most remarkable one. 'Fame will come to you,' said the fortune-teller, 'but it will not be till late in life. Only after middle-age is over will success be yours, and then it will come from a totally unexpected quarter. Your name will be known, and will be a household word in remote places of the earth where your foot will never tread. This will be the case in Africa, Australia, and above all in America.'

De Morgan, however, little impressed with this prediction, still adhered to the career which he had mapped out for himself; and it was while he was thus struggling through a phase of misplaced effort in regard to Art that he made most of what he termed later 'the great, fortunate friendships of my life.' One of the earliest of these was with Mr. Henry Holiday, the well-known artist, sculptor, and designer in stained glass, who, now an octogenarian, has some happy memories of the De Morgan family over half a century ago. Writing of the year 1863, Mr. Holiday says:—

'We became intimate this spring, and I was often at Adelaide Road where his family lived. His father, Professor De Morgan, well known for his writings on spiritualism, the three sons, William, George and Edward, and the daughters Annie, Chrissie and Mary, formed an attractive and interesting household, not the less so to me that they were most of them musical. Professor De Morgan played Pleyel's Sonatas for piano and flute with his daughter Annie. Edward played the violin and was in great request with amateur orchestras; and most of them sang. . . .

'My parents and I arranged to go to Wales in the summer of that year, and either by accident or design the De Morgans went too, to Bettws-y-Coed. The two families were near each other for some weeks, and had a lot of part singing. . . . William De Morgan, now so eminent as a writer, was then a working artist, and I felt much encouraged by his good opinion of my early efforts in decorative design.

'It was at Beddgelert that the idea of extending the range of the binocular occurred to him. . . . It was not till twenty-seven years later when De Morgan and his wife came to stay with my wife and myself in our cottage at East Preston on the Sussex Coast, that he reminded me of the theory. I at once went to Worthing and got good glasses, constructed a frame and set them up accurately, and the effect was wonderful. Distant trees, that appeared to the unassisted eyes to be in the same place, when seen in this instrument started apart in their relative distances in a surprising manner. . . .'

He proceeds to point out how invaluable such a discovery was for Naval and Military purposes; and adds the sequel which might have been anticipated—that it was adopted by the German Government, not the British!

Staying also at Bettws-y-Coed in 1863 was Simeon Solomon, the artist, and a Mr. Davidson with his daughters, both of whom were musical, and one of whom played beautifully. One evening she played the Waldstein Sonata exquisitely while the rest of the party listened entranced. Never afterwards in life could De Morgan, who was passionately fond of music, hear this Sonata without being deeply moved. 'It is the best argument for immortality that I know!' he once said. None the less, at the conclusion of Miss Davidson's rendering of it, Mr. Holiday, turning to him, remarked enthusiastically, 'How brilliantly she plays!' 'Yes!' rejoined De Morgan with a gasp of satisfaction, 'it was so brilliant it made me—wink!'

Chrissy, William's sister, Mr. Holiday relates, was very clever and witty, and, he considers, had a larger share of her father's humour and her brother's genius than the rest of the family. On one occasion when Mr. Holiday was visiting the De Morgans, the company present, four men and four girls, found themselves seated in a complete circle. The conversation, in consequence, turned in jest on the question of squaring the circle. Chrissy suddenly announced that she could solve it. All listened with breathless interest for the solution. 'You take a soft circle——' she began, and no further explanation was necessary!

Mary De Morgan, the youngest of the family, was likewise extremely lively and full of fun. She would toss her short, waving hair out of her eyes in the wild breeze upon the Welsh mountains and complain, 'My *gay* hairs will bring me down in sorrow to the grave!' Nevertheless, Mr. Holiday then considered her too downright and determined. She was talking, one day, of the lack of common sense exhibited by people with artistic tendencies, and the subject being admittedly capable of a personal application, he remonstrated warmly:—

'My dear Mary,' he said, 'I am afraid you are very prejudiced!'

'Well—all artists are fools,' was the blunt rejoinder. 'Look at yourself and Solomon!'

But if Mr. Solomon fared badly under the criticism of Mary, he never forgot, and used to retail with zest, the fashion of his first meeting with William. William was introduced to him at a party, and at once in his high-pitched, leisurely drawl, remarked tentatively—'I thought, it was you, you know, because I knew you by your appearance.'

Another young friend, known to Henry Holiday, Mr. Amherst Tyssen, was also staying in the neighbourhood, and his diary mentions his first meeting with some of the De Morgan family, when they played at 'the game of cartoons.' 'William,' he says, 'was the name of the son who visited us . . . Mary is a precocious little minx; Chrissy is an athlete . . . all are good-looking . . . William evidently has long given up the practice of hair-cutting.'

Subsequently the three young men joined forces in many expeditions and a welcome addition to the party was the Rector of Beddgelert, who somewhat inappropriately bore the name of Priestley, while rejoicing 'in the manners of a rollicking schoolboy.' 'He was,' relates Mr. Tyssen, 'an odd sort of fellow for a clergyman, good-hearted and outspoken. On some mention of matters ecclesiastical in his presence one day, he exclaimed with unaffected *naïveté*, 'Oh—something clerical?—I *hate* that sort of thing!' Mr. Tyssen adds how, one

day, De Morgan, Holiday and himself were escorted up Snowdon by the boyish Rector. 'He took us through most boggy ground. It was all thick mist; and when on the summit I wrote a calculation to show that the view from Snowdon extended seventy-four miles over the sea, he said promptly, '*What* a lie—you can't see six yards!' Long years afterwards some recollection of Priestley must surely have materialized in De Morgan's imagination into the figure of Athelstan Taylor, the athletic, attractive rector in *It Never Can Happen Again*; but in those early days he contented himself with sending to Tyssen, anent their new acquaintance, 'a set of humorous Latin rhyming lines with comments on them. In these he introduced *Dominus Sacerdotalis*, of whom one commentator said *talis qualis est* and the Welsh Editor added the words *immo vero*.'

One day an ear-splitting sound of firing annoyed all staying at the little Inn, and they learnt that a wedding was taking place at which Priestley was officiating. At a quarter to eight in the morning the happy pair drove off to Portmadoc to get married, when twenty-one guns were fired; on their return at noon—the bridal couple and guests seated together in one huge car driven by a postilion—again there was a loud volley of guns; and yet again a more continuous fusilade took place when they sat down to dinner, and when most of the villagers, joining in the festivity, got uproariously drunk. The 'guns' employed were primitive but extremely ingenious. Vertical holes were bored in the rocks above the inn, and connected by cracks, so that a marksman hitting one of these fired the lot in a series of deafening explosions which, combined with the echo rolling up the valley, created a prolonged uproar as of pandemonium let loose. 'I wish to Goodness they wouldn't get married so loud!' observed William plaintively.

Visitors who have stayed some time in a place are apt to consider themselves in the light of 'old residents' compared with fresh arrivals whose advent seems to be that of mere 'tourists.' The merry party at Bettws-y-Coed coined a word for any objectionable intruder of this type, who was forthwith contemptuously termed a *Bawp*. One day, walking along the road, they saw a man approaching and began speculating whether he would turn out to be a fresh arrival, whereupon the problem was propounded how it was possible to decide if a new-comer were a Bawp or not. William gave the matter his consideration. 'All men,' he pronounced judicially, 'are Bawps unless they can prove themselves to be the contrary!'

The Professor, it may be added, did not come to Bettws-y-Coed—even as a Bawp. He frankly disliked the country, so that he had been known to describe the mild rurality of Blackheath as 'a miserable scene of desolation.' William did not

share this idiosyncrasy. Even with his rooted dislike to any conventional form of society, he was naturally of a sociable disposition; but he delighted in beautiful scenery, and was insatiable in his desire to see the sunrise from the summit of a Welsh mountain. Mr. Tyssen records how on several occasions young De Morgan and Holiday sat up till one in the morning in order to start on a climb with this object in view, from which they returned in time for breakfast and a dip in the lake. On one occasion, however, when he accompanied them, they set off at nine at night, walked along the coast by the light of a rising moon, ate their supper at midnight in a churchyard, 'to enjoy a sensation of creeps,' and finally encamped far up the hill-side to sleep romantically among the heather till dawn. Unfortunately for their intention, they awoke a few hours later in a deluge of pouring rain, and as the grey daylight came, it revealed only a mass of impenetrable clouds drifting all around, so that nothing was left to them but to make their way home lashed by the wind and the wet, chilled to the bone, drenched but undaunted.

These expeditions, however, were occasionally not without danger, owing to the screes which they utilized in their descent, and which are a peculiarity of the district. The action of the weather constantly breaking off small pieces from the rocks on the mountains, these fall and form sloping heaps of loose stones against the steep acclivities. 'If you mount on the top of a pile of screes,' relates Mr. Tyssen, 'and descend it by digging your feet violently into the mass, you loosen a great body of the stones at each step, and carry them down with you. It is something like skating and requires the exercise of skill. Of course the stones near the top of the pile are the loosest; as you descend they become more compact and at the foot they are solid and fixed by the vegetation which has sprung up among them. The heap of screes on the south side of Mynydd Mawr was the biggest we had seen anywhere, and one day we ascended the mountain on purpose to have the fun of grinding down the heap.'

The result was somewhat disastrous, for although they had a lovely view from the top, where they amused themselves by building a small cairn to commemorate their visit, in descending, De Morgan hurt his foot, while Henry Holiday, relates Mr. Tyssen, 'got too much steam up, and losing his balance rolled over and over amongst the rocks for more than fifty feet before it was possible for him to stop,'—fearfully bruised and shaken, his head, hands, and legs cut, and pouring blood.

But in those light-hearted days, misadventures were soon forgotten, particularly by De Morgan with his eager, versatile temperament. 'The entries in my diary,' remarks Mr. Tyssen,

'show that in 1863 William De Morgan was strong, active and enterprising. He was also well-informed, clever and humorous. This came out particularly when we played the games he and his family were fond of, such as drawing pictures and writing stories on those drawn by the others, also making a list of words and finding rhymes to these, thus fashioning sets of verses. It was not always easy to find a rhyming connexion with a given word; but William solved the difficulty by introducing a negative. He discovered that it was always possible to find a rhyming word about something which the given subject did *not* do or was *not*! One evening we had a competition in finding as many rhymes as possible to the word "piano" and William won by inventing a number of ridiculous combinations of words which supplied the necessary rhyme. At this date, too, he and Henry Holiday on wet days were jointly painting a picture which represented the body of the Lady of Shalott floating down the river to Camelot and exciting the wonder of spectators on the bank. Each did a small portion of the picture, as the spirit moved him, and then left it to his collaborator to continue as the latter saw fit. The result was curious and rather beautiful.'

They sometimes played at finding anagrams, and William found one for his father, Augustus De Morgan, which was singularly appropriate:—

'Great Gun, do us a sum!'

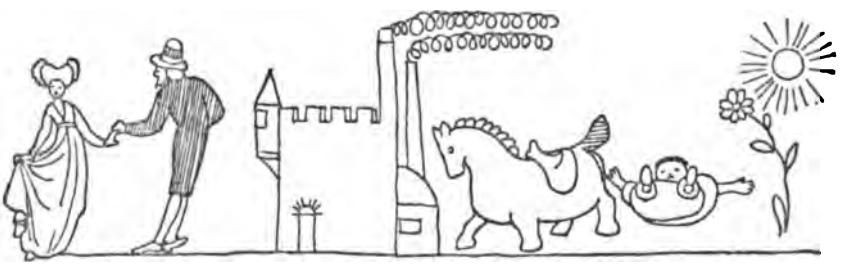
This was, however, surpassed by one confided to him by his friend Mr. Graves, later the author of *Father O'Flynn*. The father of Mr. Graves, who was Bishop of Limerick, and his uncle John Graves, who was Professor of Jurisprudence at University College, were great friends of Professor De Morgan, and on one of the rare occasions when the latter left town the Bishop and the two Professors were walking by the seaside, when John Graves, who prided himself on his anagrams, saw an invitation to an open-air service which contained the tempting announcement of a special 'Seaside Hymn.' At once the letters wickedly rearranged themselves into an anagram to which he involuntarily gave expression—'*Damn his eyes!*'—'He thought,' related Mr. Graves to William, 'that after this he had better give up anagrammatizing, as the habit was becoming morbid!'

A sample of the game of 'Cartoons,' as De Morgan played it, has survived. At this date he and Holiday had already made friends with a young artist, Edward (Burne) Jones, who added greatly to the hilarity of their circle, and who entered with zest into this pastime of drawing pictures to which a story

was to be supplied by the victim on whom these were foisted. Upon one occasion Jones drew a set of fantastic drawings to show what he termed 'economy for publishers'—that is how one set of pictures could be utilized to illustrate two entirely different tales—and De Morgan and Holiday were deputed each to write a separate interpretation of the designs without seeing what the other had written. Holiday thereupon wrote an extremely ingenious paper purporting to be drawn up by Austen Henry Layard for General Sabine, of the Royal Society, Assyria, giving an account of the further exploration of 'the great Palace of Kouyunjik' and of the unique bas-reliefs and sculptures found therein: while De Morgan, perhaps recalling his recent training under the son of the great translator of Dante, described the drawings as representing a new version of the *Divina Commedia*.

As the earliest specimen of De Morgan's fiction now existing, these verses are of interest; but it must be borne in mind that they were no serious composition, only a carelessly written effusion in a boyish game; while no emphasis is necessary to point the baffling nature of the drawings which they interpret, or the topical character of the interpretation in days when the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood represented the newest phase of Art, when Literature was still sentimental, and when Fashion decreed that crinolines were *de rigueur*, so that each woman, if not a 'dowdy' or a 'blue,' was confined in a 'stout cage.'

'The following are the fragments of Dante's Inferno which Michael Angelo illustrated. Cary's translation.'



(1) (2) (2A) (3)

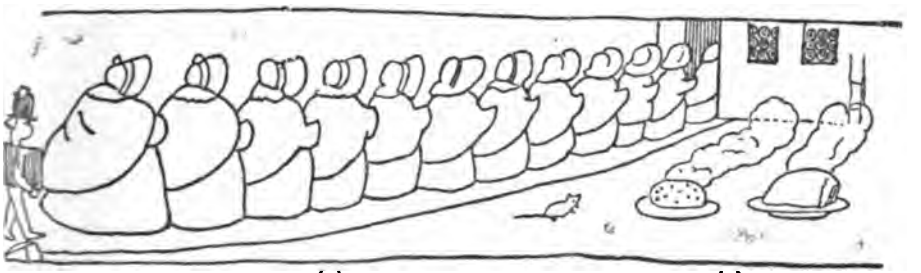
'. . . Then my Guide :—
" Lo, monsters twain [No. 1] beside the Infernal gate
Who circle rotary in hideous dance !
Father are they and daughter, Death and Sin,
Whom Satan passed in Milton. I forget
Its whereabouts i' the poem; but it's there ! "

. . . . . .

'Then in the brazen lock the key revolved
Courteous. Then I—"Sweet father, what is this Shape?" [No. 2]
And to me he—"Cerberus" . . . .
Athwart the path it stood, a form to awe
The stoutest [No. 2A], who had fallen on the path [1]
On it beholding. . . .

. . . . . .

'Now had we left the noonday sunset's ray [No. 3]
Sinister, all a-pause on Cancer's Zone
Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion's sign
In juxtaposition. There with digit raised
Virgil—"Behold!" I looked and saw a throng
Of Ghosts tumultuous [No. 4], females rushing on
Headlong towards a dungeon. "Who are these,
Sweet pedagogue?" said I; and he to me—



(4) (5)

'"The Heroines of Romance, who expiate,
Here in this circle, mawkishness above."
Then we approached, and those sad Shades cried out—
"Alas! Alas! that ever we were bores!"
Then I—"Among ye are there any here
Of Florence, or of any other town
In Italy, or out of it?"—"Yea we!" and one—"Yea, I
Was Agatha's Husband's Wife, an awful bore,
A woeful and abominable bore."
"And I was '*Mrs. Halifax, lady*,' cried another.
Then a third and smaller one—
"And I was Muriel in the self-same novel
As she who last addressed thee." Then they all
With one accord, set up a mournful song—
"Go tell Miss Mulock [2] to ha' done, and make
Night hideous with her bores no more!" "And I,"
One other cried, "was Esther Summerson
In Dickens's *Bleak House*, a conscious minx
A mock-meek bore, a moralizing bore.
O should'st thou, Mortal, e'er to earth return,
Implore my Author that he ne'er again
Write sentiment!" She vanished and we passed
Onward . . . .'

---

[1] *Footnote by De Morgan.* Michael Angelo appears to have misunderstood this passage, having drawn 'the stoutest' on the path distorted with horror. It is a fine specimen of that foreshortening for which he is remarkable.

[2] Miss D. M. Mulock (Mrs. Craik), author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, and a very large number of novels.

'The citroned pudding and the osseous beef' seen in the corner, No. 5, give scope for a dissertation upon Love contrasted with the action of 'the insignificant Rat,' who tries—

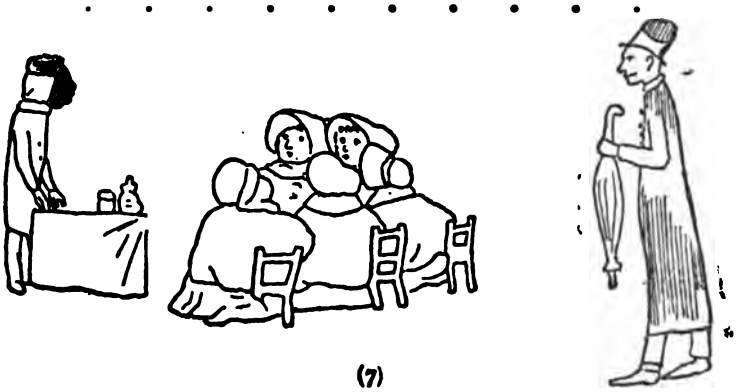
'To use Free Will according to Free Won't,'

and the poem continues—

(6)

'Then in the circle twenty-fifth we moved
And I my Guide bespake—" O Teacher, say
What yonder form betokens ? " [No. 6] for beyond
(One from a multitude) a fiend-rid goose
With wing outspread and agonizing cry
Swept o'er the Vast. Then Virgil thus to me—
" O Son, thou seest here the fruit of Sin
Most deadly, Criticism called of Art !
For yonder Goose, a critic erst on Earth
Now pays the price of many an Article
At which an earthly goose might well have sneered."
Then we approached, and to the bird I spake :—
" Wast thou of Florence ? " and he " No ! " replied ;
" Of Marylebone was I. I was an Ass
On Earth, and therefore am a Goose ;
I wrote of what I did not understand
For many penny periodicals
And others. Yet, O mortal (shoulds't thou e'er
Return to Marylebone) implore my friends
Not to be horrid humbugs ! " . . .

. . . . . .



(7)

'"In yonder dark abysm," [No. 7] said my guide
"Are punished Blues and Dowdies, they who wore
No crinoline on Earth, and thence looked limp,
Or trod with clumsy foot on toe of male.
The former that I mentioned went cram full
Of History and the Tongues to festive scenes,
And scientific recreations talked
Each to her partner in the dance." And lo!

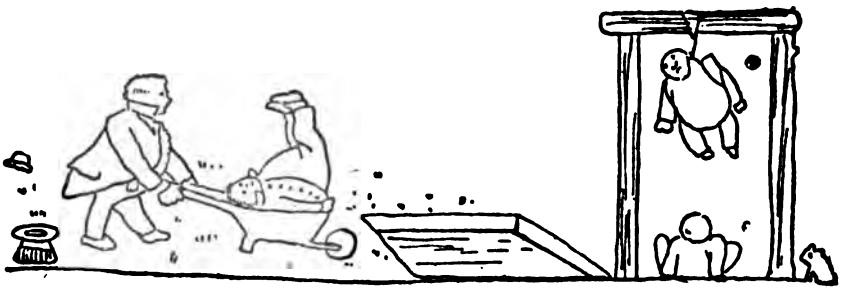
(8)

Even then a bonnet coal-scuttle I saw
On female, tough and durable, who fled
A ruthless fiend [No. 8]. He with a bristled broom
Swept her, she clinging to the wall with cries
And lamentations, towards a frightful cage
(From which, 'twould seem, she had escaped) and drove
Her in, where she with wailing sank to earth,
While he the devilish engine locked and barred.
Then we approached. That Demon fell and foul
With broom upraised, in act to strike, surveyed
My Teacher, with forbidding mien. But he
With mild rebuke suggested other course.
"Forbear," he said, "for beings twain can play
The game thy mood suggesteth." So he fled.
And the woman from beneath the cage,
"O mortal, for that such thou art I see,
I was on Earth a Dowdy and a Blue
And eke strong-minded. Wherefore I bewail
Hampered by deadly Crinoline, my Sins.
O pity, though thou blame! And O take note
(Alas! Alas! that ever I took notes)
Of my forlornness! Not a book have I
T' inform the stronger-minded! No—not a tome!
Hast thou a Cyclopædia? Perchance
Thou hast, and thou wouldst lend it." . . .'

The next illustration, No. 9, represents the Hell of those:—

'Who are wont to take no sugar in their teas,
O error prime and impious——'

(De Morgan himself being wont to indulge in a plentiful



(9) (10)

supply.) Therein a friend is seen bearing away one of the offenders in a wheelbarrow to immerse him in a pool of molasses; while No. 10, a man on a gallows, is said to depict an enemy of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood :—

> ' " Say, who was't thou on Earth," I said to him
> Who swung in midmost air with woeful plaint.
> " I was a hanger ! " straight he answered me.
> " I who once hanged, now hang for evermore.
> I hanged my friends upon a line. All P.R.B.'s
> I skied, and now myself am skied ! " " Explain," said I
> And he—" I was of the Academy
> Where Plato taught. In thy Square Trafalgar
> An Academician I
> The Boshite hanged, and skied the P.R.B.
> Or altogether fearless to become
> In danger of the Council, turned him out."
> Then at the gallows base a bitter fiend
> With scoff and scorn cried out—" Go hang thyself !
> Thou rogue thou." '

In a similar vein many other pictures are explained; and meanwhile Holiday, with well-feigned erudition, discussed them from the standpoint of an excavator and antiquarian. In No. 1 he saw an interesting ancient bas-relief of Bacchus and Ariadne. In the so-called ' Cerberus ' he saw ' the fall of Phaeton, and one of the horses galloping off in the direction of Vulcan's forge, leaving the rash youth on the plain.' In the long train of ladies in crinolines and coal-scuttle bonnets, instead of Miss Mulock's sentimental heroines, he saw ' the visitors returning home from Belshazzar's Feast,' the remains of the viands being seen upon the right; while in the lady being attacked by the broom, he saw ' the heroine of an Assyrian fable being swept from the Globe.' Finally, upon the mysterious cage in the corner he discoursed yet more learnedly, having deciphered the ancient characters relating to it which, in phonetic spelling, revealed that it was a mysterious, pre-historic article known as a kri-nu-lin.

. . . . . .

De Morgan's early acquaintance with Edward Burne-Jones

soon developed into a closer comradeship. The young artist, about six years older than himself, had in 1863 been married little more than three years to Miss Georgina Macdonald, one of the five daughters of a Wesleyan Minister, who were all remarkable for their extraordinary talent and beauty. 'Our friendship with William De Morgan,' relates Lady Burne-Jones, in the Life of her husband, 'began in Great Russell Street' [where they lived from 1862 to 1865], 'when his rare wit attracted us before we knew his other loveable qualities.' The laughter-provoking spirit of Burne-Jones, his bubbling humour, his happy philosophy of life at this date, and, above all, the warm-hearted spontaneity of his affection in dark days and bright, found a ready echo in De Morgan's heart, apart from the lure of his genius.

Other friendships likewise centre round this date. Dante Gabriel Rossetti with his vivid personality, Ford Madox-Brown with his daring innovations in art, Charles Faulkner, Cormell Price, Woolner—a clique of gifted, ardent spirits, with Spencer-Stanhope, who was later to be so closely associated with De Morgan's life, and William Morris, 'Top' of the fiery genius, with his beautiful wife, 'Janey.'

In Great Russell Street, with kindred companions, De Morgan spent delightful Bohemian evenings to which ever after he would regretfully revert—evenings when the unsophisticated little Yorkshire maid used to add to the hilarity by coming in with the naïve inquiry, ''as any of you gentlemen seen the key of the beer-barrel?' Among a coterie, however, who lived to make the world more beautiful, who had created for themselves an atmosphere of mediævalism till they affected it in mannerisms and speech, Rossetti, as a relief from the too rarefied atmosphere, introduced the habit of talking Cockney. The contrast between their ideals and their lingo subsequently furnished much food for merriment; and De Morgan, with his curious drawl, became an adept at this new accomplishment which was to have a result on his after-career that he little anticipated.

Many of Burne-Jones's letters to him, purposely illiterate in diction and spelling, illustrate this phase. One, undated, runs as follows:—

'My de$^{a}_{A}$r de Morgan,

mem

do you rem$_{A}$ber a frame i likt at your house it wus a frame from

c

florrence it wus a nice one and i likt it may Mr. Va$_{A}$ani make me one lik it may he call at your house and I may add your good ladies' house on Monday nex about 12 or so I will try to come round on Sunday afternoon to adentify the frame i hope u are quite well this seseonable winter i am ½ ded so is most people i hope to get good news from you and all your famly with wishes for a happy new year when it comes i am

'Your affectionate

'NED.'

Later, he added more explicit instructions in his normal manner :—

'If Vacani calls on Monday, and very kind of you it is of you to permit his approach to your secluded retreat—if, I say, when I was interrupted, he comes on Monday the frame I mean is a pretty one I can't remember but have a powerful recollection of—it used to be in a corner of your drawingroom, on the left of the fire place if you are warming your front, and on the right if you are warming your back—and it was a tall thing, and as I say I shall never forget it though I can't a bit remember more about it and I am

'Your affect
'NED.'

Most of these letters conclude with a clever caricature of the writer in lieu of signature. All contain sentences which linger in

the memory. 'I wish I could see you,' Burne-Jones writes despairingly, after a prolonged absence from home, 'time is slipping by horribly. I suppose we shall meet as Bogies—and if you promise not to frighten me I will promise not to frighten you! No hiding behind doors mind, I can't stand it, my nerves, never of the best, are not likely to be better then!' On another occasion, after a good grumble at an enforced absence from home, he adds: 'Now I am in a calmer frame—as the picture observed when the newspapers said it wanted more repose. But O come and let us be joyful on Saturday evening.'

Once, noticing a fresh canvas in Burne-Jones's studio, De Morgan inquired if it was intended for a new picture. 'Yes,' replied Burne-Jones, quoting the conventional newspaper

CARICATURE BY EDWARD BURNE-JONES

Sketched for William De Morgan.

"Drawn by E. B. J. to show me he could have drawn like Caravaggio if he had tried."—WM. De M.

criticism of pre-Raphaelite work—'I am going to cover that canvas with flagrant violations of perspective and drawing, in crude inharmonious colour.' Later in the evening he said to De Morgan: 'You know that was all gammon I was talking about perspective and drawing—I only do things badly because I don't know how to do them well—I do want to do them well.' Another time he remarked: 'Why should people attack artists as they do?—Artists mean no harm—at least I don't. I only want to make a beautiful thing, that will remain beautiful after I am a Bogey, and give people pleasure when they look at it.'

One Sunday afternoon De Morgan brought his mother to look at the pictures Burne-Jones was painting. As we have already seen, Sophia De Morgan took life somewhat seriously, and at this date she had been devoting much time to the study of Symbolism, in which she was fast becoming an expert. No sooner did she see the work of the young artist, than she began reading into it a meaning a-tune to her favourite hobby. 'What I *do* appreciate in your painting,' she said, at last, judicially, turning to him after studying it for some time with great solemnity, 'is its depth of meaning—its profound symbolism! How well I read your intention here—and here—and here'—enumerating rapidly several mystical interpretations of the subjects before her.

'My dear fellow,' said Burne-Jones to De Morgan with amazement when she was gone, 'I am so delighted she saw that in it—*I* never knew it was there!'

Many a laugh in the years to follow did De Morgan have over other interpretations of his friend's work. For instance, on one occasion, Burne-Jones's beautiful 'Golden Stair' appeared under the wrong number in the catalogue as 'A Stampede of Wild Bulls.' On another, a very affected model mentioned that she was sitting to 'Mr. Jones, one of the rising artists of the day, for a beautiful religious subject,' i.e., the female figure in a picture of 'Christ and the Woman of Samaria,' and De Morgan—unable to recall any work bearing this title on which Burne-Jones was then engaged, and suspecting a practical joke—made inquiries and found that the deluded lady was posing for the female in 'King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid.'

When Burne-Jones left the house in Kensington Square, where he lived after leaving Great Russell Street, and moved to the Grange, West Kensington, he took De Morgan round the garden of his new home in order to expatiate on the beauty of the vegetation of which he had become the proud possessor. 'We are so excited,' he said, pointing to some bushes, 'to see whether these turn out to be peaches or blackberries!'

One of the first letters sent by him to De Morgan from this new address refers to a picture which he had just been painting

while on a visit to Spencer-Stanhope near Cobham, 'where, relates his wife, 'our host's cheery companionship indoors did him as much good as the fresh country air outside.' Apparently De Morgan had recently been suffering from one of those passing fits of depression to which youth and an artistic temperament are inevitably prone, and the recognition distressed Burne-Jones.

Edward Burne-Jones to William De Morgan.

'THE GRANGE,
'NORTH END ROAD,
'FULHAM, S.W.
'*West Grandmother.*

'DEAR DM.,—

'You can't see the Annunciation, its away being photingrafted—but come to-morrow eveng—Mr. Morris is here, and there will be Mr. Rooke, R.A., on his way to Venice—come.

'I thought you looked not quite happy—it has bothered me—I wanted you to come on Sunday to be cheered,—I don't like you to look like that. I want you fat and merry, full of rude and coarse jesting, I don't like you to be miserable. If I could help you in this ere . . . life you ought to tell me—ought to—for I'm old enough, aye, and ugly enough to be anybody's father, and I'd give you money (up to a pound say) or advice (derived from a close study of Epictetus)—anyhow I'd cheer and comfort you and try to make you merry.

'I'm always merry—I don't care—I won't care——

'Come to-morrow and we'll sneer aloud. Mr. Morris will, in the course of the evening—I should say coarse—Mr. Morris will, I repeat damn many things, and it is good to hear him, he will express himself in an uncompromising manner about life generally and will brace the nerves of the flaccid.

'Dear old chap, come, and we dine as you know at 7½.

'Your affect
'NED.'

Many years afterwards De Morgan tried to recall his earliest impression of William Morris who was five years his senior. 'I first met him,' he writes, 'at Red Lion Square, where I was taken by Henry Holiday—the very earliest dawn of him to me being the *Athenæum* review of his earliest poems (Dr. Garnett wrote it, I fancy), quoting *Rapunzel*. At this visit I chiefly recollect him dressing himself in vestments and playing on a regal, to illustrate certain points in connexion with stained glass. As I went home it suddenly crossed my mind as a strange thing that he should, while doing what was so trivial and almost grotesque, contrive to leave on my memory so strong an impression of his power—he certainly did, somehow.'

Morris's own remarks concerning the value of first impressions may well have recurred to De Morgan in this connexion. 'Always trust your first impression,' Morris used to say; 'it is pretty sure to be right. Later, you may fancy it was wrong, but you will invariably come back to it in the end!'—'Morris,' De Morgan

remarked subsequently, 'was certainly the most wonderful genius I ever knew. He produced poetry as readily as a bird sings!' One day, calling upon the Burne-Joneses, De Morgan, who adored children, wandered up to the nursery to pay his respects to little Margaret Burne-Jones; and on coming downstairs again, he relates: 'I found Morris in the parlour—he was nibbling a pen. And he said, after a few words of chat—'Now, you see, I'm going to write poetry, so you'll have to cut—I'm sorry, but it can't be helped!' So I cut—and I have a notion that I know what he wrote that evening, as next Saturday when I turned up, as I always did then-a-days, he read us a lot of the study of Psyche. So I'm glad I cut!—I recollect his remarking that it was very hard work writing that sort of thing. I took it that he was speaking of the thrashing Psyche gets at the hands of Venus. He really felt for her—and was evidently glad it was over.'

Another early recollection of 'Top's' moments of inspiration was even more impressive. Calling upon him one day in Great Ormond Street, De Morgan was startled by a shower of books which flew out of a window on the first floor. 'Oh, never mind, sir,' said the servant to him apathetically; 'It's only Master composing!'

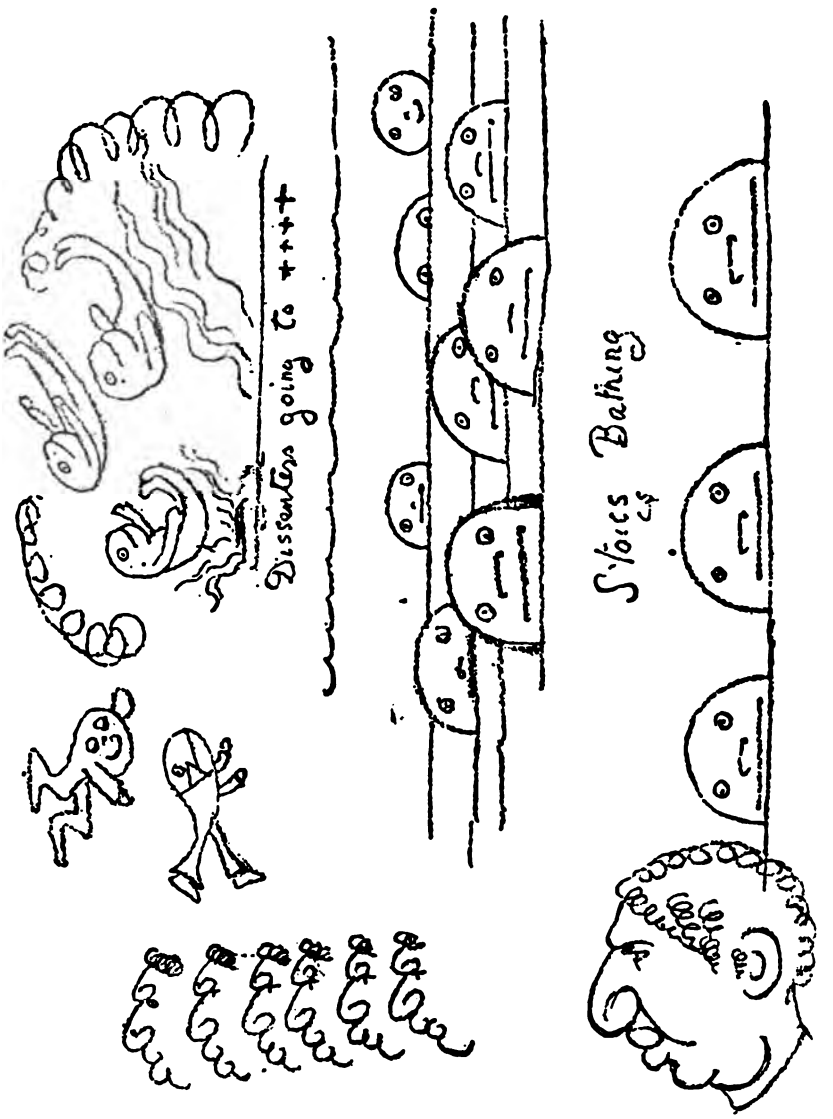
Once while De Morgan was sitting with Morris, he received a visit from a wealthy Jew who wished to consult him about six panels in a scheme of decoration. After the man had departed, Morris sat absently pencilling upon the walls of the room a design resembling the figure 6. Thereupon De Morgan, who, according to his habit, had been idly scribbling on a sheet of paper, added to his previous flights of fancy the portrait, shown overleaf, of their late visitor, fashioned out of the same hieroglyphic.

Even at this date Morris was full of the enthusiasm for social reform which later became a dominant factor in his life. 'I go about,' he said to young De Morgan, 'preaching the divine gospel of Discontent.' To him contentment represented stagnation, the fatal barrier to progress. To De Morgan it was an inherent part of his temperament. Life, that 'shining and nameless thing,' was to him a riddle curious and interesting, which, in its different phases, he regarded with the eye of a philosopher—not a reformer.

It was in another matter that the influence of William Morris upon his career at this juncture was pronounced.

As an aftermath of the Tractarian movement, a strong impetus had been given to Church decoration during the years immediately preceding this period. The bare places of worship which had been approved by a more Puritanical generation, were being transformed under a growing desire for beauty of ornament

and design. Decorative Art, in the ascendant, was recognized as a valuable asset of the Church; and Jowett, writing to a friend in 1865, notices as a prominent sign of the times, the



'æsthetic-Catholic revival going on in the London Churches.' To meet the need of the age in matters both ecclesiastical and secular, William Morris established himself as the champion of artistic handicraft.

Fresh from painting the Oxford Union, he and others of his fraternity met and discussed methods for rendering the commonplace things of life more beautiful. 'The first notion of the firm of Morris & Company, the name and wares of which have since become so widely spread,' relates Mr. Mackail, 'sprang up among friends in talk, and cannot be assigned to any single author. It was in a large measure due to Madox-Brown; but perhaps even more to Rossetti, who, poet and idealist as he was, had business qualities of a high order, and the eye of a trained financier for anything which had money in it. To Morris himself, who had not yet been forced by business experience into being a business man, the firm probably meant little more than a definite agreement for co-operation and common work among friends who were also artists . . . of these associates Burne-Jones and Madox-Brown were regularly employed in making designs for stained glass, mainly, of course, for church windows.' Premises were taken at 8 Red Lion Square in 1861, a few doors from the rooms formerly shared in their bachelor days by Morris and Burne-Jones; although with the establishment there of the firm of 'Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.,' many of those who had first discussed the scheme drifted to other occupations. 'The old Oxford Brotherhood, with its ideas of common life and united action, finally fell asunder'; Spencer-Stanhope, and others of the former fraternity remained no more than deeply interested spectators of the new venture; while even 'Morris, Burne-Jones and Faulkner were actually in a minority in the new association.' The designing of work undertaken by the firm was, of course, mainly carried out by the members of the firm themselves; 'but other artists, including Albert Moore, William De Morgan and Simeon Solomon, made occasional designs for glass and tiles.' [1] In the basement a small kiln was built for the firing of these.

De Morgan was by now convinced that his first venture as an artist was a failure. 'I certainly,' he wrote many years afterwards, 'was a feeble and discursive dabbler in picture-making. I transferred myself to stained-glass window-making, and dabbled in that too till 1872.' About the age of twenty-five he turned his attention to this new line of work, but he estimated his own powers in regard to the result too modestly. 'His designs for stained-glass windows were often remarkable,' was the verdict of his contemporary, Sir William Richmond, to which William Morris added his testimony, and the daughter of the latter, Miss May Morris, long years after, related how specimens of his glass which she saw hanging up in his home struck her as being 'singularly rich in colour and simple and dignified in

[1] *The Life of William Morris*, by J. W. Mackail, Vol. I, pp. 144-5.

design.' The very suggestion of something primitive and mediæval in his conceptions which, as long as he adhered to painting pictures, involved a certain lack of pliability and life in his figures, fell into harmony with the ecclesiastical ideal at which he now aimed, as, too, did his love of quaint outline and intricate ornamentation; while the glowing, jewel-like colours which he sought to produce, gave fresh scope for his love of scientific experiment.

Meanwhile the congenial fraternity with which he had become associated in the fresh impetus given to the Arts and Crafts did not in any measure monopolize his individual effort. He remained always apart, never even nominally connected with Morris's enterprise, and working on independent lines. 'A common error,' he said, later in life, 'is to suppose that I was a partner in Morris's firm. I was never connected with his business beyond the fact that, on his own initiative, he exhibited and sold my work, and that subsequently he employed my tiles in his schemes of decoration.'

The first tile which De Morgan produced, a pink lustre, blurred and dull compared with his later work, he took to show to another friend, Horatio Lucas, by whose family it is still treasured. 'Keep that,' said Mr. Lucas privately to his wife, 'for one day De Morgan will be a great man!' But although the painting of tiles was one of the primary occupations of the new Morris Firm in Red Lion Square, yet when, in process of time, De Morgan undertook the manufacture of these on a large scale, Morris decided that it was no longer necessary to continue this branch of his own industry, and subsequently he procured all requisite tiles from De Morgan, executed in the latter's designs. 'Morris never made but three designs for my execution,' De Morgan once remarked—'the *Trellis and Tulip*, the *Poppy* and another—I forget the name. I never could work except by myself and in my own manner.'

Thus first in London Street, then in Grafton Street, and finally at 40 Fitzroy Square, De Morgan conducted his own experiments in stained glass and soon, by a natural transition, in tiles and lustre-ware. 'His is the story,' related William Morris's daughter, many years after, 'of most of our Arts and Crafts workers of the mid and later nineteenth century—the impulse of invention that seeks for outlet—the invention brought to a dead stop by the loss of tradition in the crafts—the necessity of spending valuable time experimenting in the A B C of an Art, and patiently working it up in the path in which his instinct guides him.' At length, being dissatisfied with the reproductions of his designs and the poor interpretations of his ideas by others, De Morgan set up a kiln in the cellar of the house in Fitzroy Square in order to attempt his own reproductions, and ran the flue through an old chimney

of the building. Miss Laura Hertford, who rented the floor above, an artist who had the distinction of being the first lady ever to exhibit in the Royal Academy, viewed these proceedings with considerable mistrust. 'You will burn the house down!' she remonstrated; but William De Morgan had no misgivings, and he thus describes the result:—

'In '72 (or '70) I re-discovered the lost Art of Moorish or Gubbio lustres. It had been re-discovered before in Italy in 1856—but that I didn't know at the time, or I wouldn't have presumed. It has been re-discovered since, times out of number, and a glorious array of old Italian names, Maestro Giorgio of Gubbio, etc., is always trotted out to mount the re-discoverers on. I never did anything to justify a belief that the *art* of the cinquecento had been re-discovered—it was merely the pigment. But that's neither here nor there.

'Well!—in the course of my re-discoveries, the flame from my kiln discovered a wood-joist in the house chimney of 40 Fitzroy Square, and the roof got burned off. This *incendio* sat for the fire at C. Vance and Co's. I hadn't any money, so when my new factory-to-be was discussed, I demurred on the ground that I couldn't find a locus for it, and keep the stained glass on, perhaps. A friend offered capital, and I moved from the ruins of my Carthage. I started afresh as a potter, but I lost my stained glass, which was bringing me more than I have ever earned since.'[1]

'The landlord didn't seem at all amiable!' De Morgan remarked pathetically, when referring to his act of incendiarism; but this, to him, unreasonable peevishness on the part of the owner of the house certainly was the direct means of terminating one phase of his artistic career, and inaugurating another. Before dwelling on this new chapter in his life, however, we must glance briefly at certain events which were happening in his home circle, and the trend of which helped to clinch his new departure.

His father, Professor De Morgan, had, as we have seen, joined University College in early youth, chiefly with a view to upholding the ideal of religious tolerance in matters educational. For thirty-six years he had held the Professorship with a disinterested loyalty of attachment to that principle, since, as already mentioned, a man of limited means and large family, he could, with his brilliant acquirements, have readily obtained a more lucrative and advantageous appointment elsewhere.

In 1866, however, the Professorship of Mental Philosophy and Logic at the College fell vacant, and the Rev. J. Martineau was a candidate for the chair. He was a distinguished scholar and admirably suited for election; but he was rejected by the Council on the ground that he was a Unitarian. This was a departure from the ideal which the College had been founded to maintain—'its loudly vaunted principle that the creed of neither teacher nor student was to be an element of his

[1] A letter written in 1906 to Louis Joseph Vance.

competence to teach or learn,' and still more, the decision was, as Professor De Morgan pointed out in this particular instance, dictated by worldly considerations both unworthy and inconsistent. 'The interference of the College as a College,' he wrote to Sir John Herschel, 'and a settlement of this question *officially*, is a step in which it concerns me, with my way of thinking, to take a part.' Sincerity had been the guiding motive of Augustus De Morgan's life, and he at once resigned. 'It is unnecessary for me to leave the College—the College has left me,' he wrote, and in a fine and impassioned letter, which he addressed to the Council, he lamented bitterly their abandonment of that grand spirit of tolerance, 'in which there is more religion than in all exclusive systems put together,' Later, when it was desired to place some likeness of him in the Institution to whose advantage he had devoted his life, he refused sternly :—

'I am asked to sit for a bust or picture, to be placed in what is described as "our old College." This location is impossible; our old College no longer exists. It was annihilated in November last.

'The old College to which I was so many years attached by office, by principle, and by liking, had its being, lived and moved in the refusal of *all religious disqualifications*. Life and Soul are now extinct.

'I will avoid detail. I may be writing to some who approve of it. To me the College is like a Rupert's drop [1] with a little bit pinched off the end; that is, a heap of dust. . . .'

But bravely as he faced the issue, the blow at the very root of the work to which his life had been devoted was felt by him severely. 'If force of will can succeed,' he said, 'the Institution is to pass away from before my mind and to become as if it had never existed.' But other causes at this date accentuated the mental grief and strain which resulted in a rapid undermining of his physical strength.

As before mentioned, his eldest daughter, little Alice, had been in her grave since Christmas, 1853, a victim to phthisis. The year following the Professor's retirement from University College, his son George, then founder and secretary of the Mathematical Society—the one of all his children who had appeared destined to follow in his own footsteps—succumbed to tuberculosis of the throat after three years of anxiety respecting his lungs. At that same date his other son, Edward, had been forced to go away for an eighteen-months' voyage in 'a very fluctuating state of health, which occasioned constant anxiety to his parents.' And still another cloud began to gather over the stricken family in the dire

[1] A Rupert's drop is a drop of glass which is thrown while in a state of fusion into water, and consolidates into a retort-like shape. The bulb may be struck sharply with a hammer without breaking, but if the end of the tail be nipped off, the whole flies into dust.

illness, from the same cause, of Chrissy, one time the merriest member of the home circle.

The Professor faced these successive tragedies with pathetic patience. 'A strong and practical conviction of a better and higher existence,' he wrote to his old friend, Sir John Herschel, 'reduces the whole thing to emigration to a country from which there is no way back and no mail packets, with a certainty of following at a time to be arranged in a better way than I can do it.' But the time of his own departure was then nearer than he dreamed. An abnormally hot summer in 1868, acting on a constitution weakened by intense mental suffering, brought on a sharp attack of congestion of the brain; and although he again rallied and his mental powers resumed much of their old vigour, the death of his daughter Christina in August, 1870, was, in seven months, followed by his own.

For many years, as we have seen, he had been deeply interested in, and had closely investigated, tales of appearances of the dead to the dying. During the last two days of his life his son William, watching by him, observed that he seemed to recognize the presence of all those of his family whom he had lost by death—his three children, his mother and sister, all of whom he greeted audibly, naming them in the reverse order to that in which they left this world. Whether it was the wandering of a dying brain or a happy vision of actuality, who shall decide? But the belief in which he lived, and in which he died, was proclaimed in the old fighting spirit by a characteristic sentence in his will:—

'I commend my future with hope and confidence to Almighty God; to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I believe in my heart to be the Son of God, but Whom I have not confessed with my lips, *because in my time such confession has always been the way up in the world.*'

To William, the loss of his father with whose character his own was so much akin; the brooding shadow of death which had engulfed so many loved members of the home-circle and still hung threateningly over the survivors; and the sudden catastrophe which had overtaken his work just when it was promising to be a financial success—all came with a sequence of disaster which would have stunned a less buoyant temperament. But deeply as he suffered, he bore the ills of life with the elasticity of a philosopher. If his former world had become a pinch of dust, all the more did it behove him to construct a new one. In 1872, with his mother and his sister Mary, the only remaining members of his family dependent on his care, he moved from the house at Primrose Hill, where his father had died, to No. 30 Cheyne Row, and there in the garden he established a kiln, and started life as a potter.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHELSEA PERIOD

1872–1881

THE house in which began the new era in De Morgan's career was in a quiet backwater of Chelsea, two doors removed from that occupied by Carlyle, a neighbour with whom Mrs. De Morgan had been acquainted from early life. It has been pointed out as singularly 'fitting that De Morgan, perhaps the greatest of all English Ceramic Artists, should have developed his art within a stone's throw of the site of the old Chelsea China works, of 150 years ago, and almost opposite the site of Wedgwood and Bentley's Chelsea Establishment.'

'The Chelsea of to-day,' writes Miss May Morris, 'is a gilded desert to those who knew it then. Cheyne Row was an unpretentious old-world corner at the upper end of which stood the beautiful little house built for G. P. Boyce by Philip Webb, the tree-tops of its pleasant garden waving above the high brick wall; from here looking down on the Row one caught glimpses of the light on the river and the red-sailed barges; and one of the charms of the place was the sense of adventure that a quiet corner gleans from that sight of the way into the open world.'

The lingering romance of Chelsea, its still visible links with a picturesque Past; the Old Church with its lore of history and its monuments to a vanished race; above all, the placid grey river bearing on its breast the world's traffic while reflecting the wayward moods of cloud and sunshine—all made a strong appeal to De Morgan which never diminished throughout the forty-six years which he was destined to reside in the locality.

In those early days he would cross the old wooden bridge then leading to Battersea, and pausing midway, would remind himself of the favourite superstition connected with it. For the Chelsea of that day believed firmly that seven currents of air met in the centre span of the bridge with wonderful health-giving properties; and long years after this superstition had died, De Morgan to his delight found a carpenter who insisted that he had had practical experience of its truth. On a bitter March day, fifty years previously, this man's mother had taken him to

stand on the bridge with his six brothers and sisters who were all suffering from whooping-cough, and the value of the cure was surely proved, for not one of them died, but—as the sceptical may point out do other children similarly afflicted—all survived to grow up hale and strong!

Little as De Morgan dreamed it, one more romance was to be added to the history of that former river-side village in the story of the busy potter who now, amid drab, modern surroundings, strove to weave things of beauty out of his fertile brain. Yet, for a time, though deeply occupied in developing his pottery, he still occasionally drew designs for stained-glass windows. It was during this transitional period in his art that he designed the stained glass for a large drawing-room which Sir Samuel Marling was adding to his house, Stanley Park, and also manufactured lustre tiles for the hearth of the same room, as well as a set of little boys smoking, for the chimney piece in the smoking-room there. In reference to this, the Rev. George West, Sir Samuel's nephew, remarks:—

'The Grisaille work in the windows is very good; but some square divisions between the mullions are filled with very large heads of Shakespeare, Dante, etc., as De Morgan thought the room was to be a library. They are too large in scale; but three full-length figures of the seasons are very fine. About this date I used to go to his mother's house in Cheyne Row pretty frequently on Sunday afternoons, and it was delightful to meet all the celebrities there, but the newly-fledged High-art people used to pose and attitudinize, and De Morgan used to make great game of their affectations. I also visited his studio and used often to suggest buying something which took my fancy, but always met with the same answer, "Oh—I don't think I can spare that just now!"

'I subsequently lost sight of him and only many years afterwards met him unexpectedly in Florence. The tall, brisk figure was then slightly bowed, and iron-grey locks had replaced the chestnut hair of earlier days, but the identity of the man was unmistakable, and I greeted him with delighted recollection. Reminiscences and platitudes were exchanged, and I made the somewhat hackneyed remark that the Arno was smelling very badly. "Yes," replied De Morgan thoughtfully, "there have been a good many suicides lately. But"—sniffing gently—"I don't think it is quite a smell of suicide!"'

Besides occasionally reverting to stained-glass work, De Morgan during the early years of his art as a potter still continued to paint a few pictures of a decorative character; but these were principally done with the object of experimenting in pigments—to test some novel chemical process which often resulted in a peculiar brilliance and beauty of colouring, but which, in

many instances, doomed them to perish prematurely, owing to the dryness of the medium that he had mixed with the paint. Of these, 'The Alchemist's Daughter' was one of the most successful, and a picture of St. George accompanied by a Goblin, in connexion with which must be mentioned his first acquaintance with a lady who afterwards celebrated it in verse.

On Christmas Day, 1873, De Morgan joined in the festivities at the Grange with the Burne-Joneses. 'In the hall,' writes Lady Burne-Jones, 'there was a magic lantern and snap-dragon. Charles Faulkner and William De Morgan enchanted us all by their pranks, in which Morris and Edward Poynter occasionally joined, while Mrs. Morris, placed safely out of the way, watched everything from her sofa.' At this party, playing with their cousins Philip and Margaret Burne-Jones, were little Rudyard Kipling and his brilliant sister Alice, or Trix, afterwards Mrs. Fleming, whose father, John Lockwood Kipling, the son of a Wesleyan Minister, had married a sister of Lady—then Mrs.—Burne-Jones. Alice Fleming in later life shared much of her brother's singular genius, and wrote verses the lilt and rhythm of which are full of music. Some of her most successful poems, however, were said to be written while she was in a trance; and, on De Morgan's picture of St. George, she sent him, fully twenty years after that Christmas party, what she terms 'some rough verses anent your picture' which, she explains, were written in automatic writing.

ST. GEORGE IN THE TRANSVAAL

He lost his way at eventide
And wandering where the paths divide,
He found a goblin by his side
A satyr child,
Whose look was wild.
The day drew on to eventide.

Ah! good St. George, at eventide,
Choose not a goblin for thy guide,
Or things of terror may betide
Before moonrise,
Beneath thine eyes;
Go forth alone where paths divide.

St. George knew well the goblin lied
But yet he took him for his guide
And on through shadows dappled, pied,
He led the Knight,
At fall of night,
Until they reached the water-side.

THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER
WILLIAM DE MORGAN PINXIT

[In the possession of Mrs. Spencer Pickering.

St. George's own betrothéd bride
Prayed for him still at eventide
Within the chapel of St. Vide.
A world away
She knelt to pray:
He needed prayer with such a guide.

The blue waves kissed the bouldered beach,
Far on the billows out of reach,
There shone a wondrous form to teach
Fear to a Knight,
A faëry sight:—
The satyr child laughed on the beach.

A sea nymph with gold rippled hair
Rocked on the ripples, free from care,
She had no soul, she was so fair,—
St. George, I pray,
Look not that way,
Poor mortal strength has much to bear.

Queen Mary, pity now thy Knight
For he is in an evil plight
Standing alone—twixt nymph and sprite—
Ah Princess pray
A world away—
Keep watch and vigil all the night.

The Princess is so very far—
As distant as the evening star;
The nymph is near withouten bar,
The Knight is young,
Her honeyed tongue
Would win Apollo from his car.

Full many a Knight at eventide
Still wanders on through paths untried,
While loved ones pray
A world away—
For his dear feet that go astray!

Ere long De Morgan's wealth of imagination and earnestness of endeavour brought about one happy result in the development of his pottery—a noticeable extension of output. His small kilns, erected in a shed at the end of the back garden in his new home, soon proved inadequate to his needs. A few doors higher in the street, No. 36, was a spacious old house with a larger garden, known as Orange House, which stood upon the site now occupied by the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Redeemer, and this De Morgan proceeded to rent from Mr. Wickham Flower as a show-room and workshop, while still continuing to reside at No. 30. An old coach-house which stood between the north side of Orange House and Upper Cheyne Row made an excellent shelter for the bigger kiln which he now proceeded to set up,

while—despite the previous disastrous experience in Fitzroy Square—a flue, with happy recklessness, was carried up one of the old chimneys of the house. The first floor was given up to the leading painters in his employ. The show-room, with a store-room at the back, occupied the whole ground floor. For himself De Morgan reserved a room on the second floor which he used as a studio, and in which he often slept when working late at night.

It was characteristic that he started his occupation of his new premises with a catastrophe due to his impatience to get under way. It is essential to go to work very cautiously with a new kiln, and to test it thoroughly before attempting to fire any contents. But De Morgan had on hand an order for a thousand tiles of a fan-shaped flower pattern which he called the B.B.B., after the firm Barnard, Bishop and Barnard. Anxious to complete this, at his very first firing, when the heat was at its strongest, he blew the top of the new kiln off, and the order for the B.B.B. was, as he expressed it, 'temporarily re-named the D.D.D. !'

Already prominent amongst his painters in those early days were Charles and Fred Passenger. The former, who was a cripple, worked with De Morgan for nearly thirty years, the latter, despite ill-health, for twenty-eight. Their initials appear on much of his pottery, and their work has a distinctive quality very apparent. Dr. Reginald Thompson likewise, who became a great friend of De Morgan, took part in the designing, and some of his productions and reproductions are extremely clever, particularly those of animals and birds, in which he excelled. He and De Morgan would vie with each other in inventing grotesque beasts and monsters, and laugh like happy schoolboys when either succeeded in evolving some more than usually fantastic creature. As a result of this friendship, Dr. Thompson eventually married De Morgan's sister Annie, and their three brilliant sons inherited much of the talent of their mother's family.

Another, but younger, artist of great skill, whose work belongs to a rather later date, was Joe Juster, the vases which he painted and initialled deserving to rank amongst some of the finest work. In De Morgan's employ likewise were half a dozen girls who were engaged on Dutch and other tiles, and who occupied a room in one of the adjacent houses in Upper Cheyne Row.

Mr. Reginald Blunt, in a delightful chapter on 'Etrurians in Chelsea,' describes how De Morgan's painters enjoyed their labours in their pleasant abode 'where the workshop was not, as later at Merton and Fulham, away from the cheery haunts of humanity, and where the 'carriage folk' visiting the show-room below enlivened their window view, and the feeling that

one or other of their productions was at that moment finding a purchaser downstairs gave a touch of lively interest and reality to their doings. De Morgan was constantly in and about, working out designs upstairs, counselling and correcting the decorators, meeting friends and visitors below, or superintending the packing of a kiln in the outhouse; and towards evening would often be heard a big voice shouting "Bill!" and footsteps mounting the stairs three at a time like a schoolboy's, which told of the arrival of William Morris with ruffled hair and indigo-stained fingers, keen to discuss some new project or just to hear how things were going with his friend.'[1]

'Many a time,' relates Miss Morris, 'when our Hammersmith quartette paid a visit to the Chelsea trio, we would go round to Orange House after tea, and spend part of the long summer evening wandering through the house and garden eager over the latest experiment. There were times when a kiln spoilt cast a slight cloud on the gathering in spite of the gentle courtesy of our friend, who would not even mention the mishap; times when a pot that had roused no special expectation came out a triumph of shining colour amongst the ruin of a whole firing; there were "spoilt" pieces that one could not help loving for some special quality in them—in short a whole chapter of the story which, passing under the eyes of those familiar with the building up of a craft, was alive with incidents hailed and followed with keenest interest.'

But of the wearing anxiety connected with the work—the need for a cool head and a brave heart braced to meet failure, Mr. Blunt can speak from experience.

'No one,' he records, 'who has not been actually engaged in fine pottery work can quite realize the strain and tension of the firing of a big pottery kiln, in which, it may be, hundreds of pounds' worth of decorative work, and months of arduous labour, are put to the hazard of the flames; when a whiff of unregulated draught, an ill-secured saggar, a few degrees more or less of furnace temperature, a slight misjudgment of the critical moment of completion—any one of the dozen swiftly changing conditions —may mean all the difference between success and disaster. More than once I have been by William De Morgan's side at these supremely critical moments and admired the coolness and quiet resource—the high-pitched voice never quitting its resonant drawl—which marked the excitement of a big issue in the balance. But the end, whatever it was, was sure to reveal the rare good traits, the grit, perseverance, and invincible good-humour; boyish delight, it may be, in a fine thing finely achieved; at the worst, an object lesson or a clue won and registered, with a smile, from failure.'

[1] *The Wonderful Village*, by Reginald Blunt, p. 174.

To Mr. Shaw Sparrow, De Morgan later described certain details of his process thus:—

'(1) The wondrous, varied beauty of lustre depends on the decomposition of a metallic salt, usually copper or silver.

'(2) The salt is made into a paint by means of a gum fluid and lamp black, the latter being used to enable the painter to see distinctly his design.

'(3) The design is painted on the smooth enamel or glaze *after* the glaze has been fired.

'(4) I use tin glaze, as I find it sensitive to lustre work.

'(5) After the design painted on the glaze is dry, the pot or dish is fired again.

'(6) In the old Persian tiles, wood provided all the heat. With a coke (or a gas) kiln, at a given moment, when the heat has produced a certain tint and glow of incandescent effect, burning chips of wood are put inside the kiln; then the minute and heated particles of carbon in the smoke combine with the oxygen of the salt, setting free the metal, which is left in a finely-divided state fixed on the enamel's surface.'

To the uninitiated, primarily in consequence of the uniformity demanded in tile production, the gulf is not always apparent which separates the original work of the genuine artist from a mere mechanical reproduction of printed designs. Of this fact De Morgan was keenly aware, and in regard to it he wrote as follows to Mr. Shaw Sparrow:—

'The painting, as you know, is executed not on the tiles but on thin paper. The colour used is the ordinary underglaze colours (or at least one ordinary ditto), the paper is attached to the tile face down, the pattern reversing, and the paper burns away under the glaze.

'There has been some confusion of ideas in connexion with this process between it and *printing*, as in ordinary etched plate printing, block-printing as in wall-papers, and stencilling. The confusion, I believe, has been possible only in minds where the last three processes, all totally distinct, were already plunging chaotically against one another. The tiles printed in my way are painted line by line and tint by tint, just as much as pictures in exhibitions, and are just as little to be described as *prints* as such pictures would be after they had been relieved and transferred to another canvas. The Madonna di San Sisto, for example, is, quite distinctly, *not* a print in any sense of the word.

'Of course the fact that the tiles of one pattern are all alike, contributes to the idea that they are printed. But things that are painted alike *are* alike, and the reasons these have to be painted so are of a purely commercial nature. Nevertheless the system is thoroughly unwholesome. Things painted by hand have no value unless the qualities that give value to the hand-painting are present; and in my opinion the sooner the acquiescence in the commercial demand for exact uniformity comes to an end the better. Repetition work ought to be very cheap, and done by repeating processes.'

One difficulty with which De Morgan had to contend was the lack of unity of interpretation between himself and the draughtsmen on whom he depended for the reproduction of his ideas. The weakness of all modern craftsmanship is an over-

WILLIAM DE MORGAN FECIT

[Tile in the possession of Mr. Halsey Ricardo.

refined finish; and he was keenly alive to this trouble; the designer and the draughtsman being often so dissimilar in temperament that the former had to *copy* the latter instead of *interpreting* him; and if the copying became too mechanical and laboured, much of the spontaneity of the original was inevitably lost. On one design still in existence De Morgan himself has noted for his fellow-worker: 'I want you to use your own discretion as much as possible'; and there were times when the reproduction of his work was as out of harmony with the spirit of his intention as can be a symphony of Beethoven under the hands of an unskilled musician.

Thus the pottery done directly under his personal supervision alone bears the stamp of his individual genius. In other specimens, although his designs were utilized by his workmen, the subtle grace of the original lines and the vitality of the original conception was too often lost or marred. An old workman who laboured with him early in his career, used to relate how De Morgan was so particular with all work which came under his direct inspection that often after a vase was quite finished—to the superficial observer exquisitely hand-painted and ready for baking—he would, if he did not consider it was absolutely flawless, toss it relentlessly on the floor and smash it into a thousand pieces.

At all times so absorbed was he in creating and supervising that he would forget all besides. Reminded that it was long past his dinner hour, he would rush off to the nearest baker's, buy a piece of bread, and returning in haste would eat it absently while continuing his examination or direction of the work going on around him. This absorption in the creative and constructive part of his business involved a corresponding indifference to its prosaic side, and it is said that, more than once he forgot to sign the cheques when he paid his men—a lapse which they treated with good-humoured indulgence, often omitting to point it out till the wages again fell due upon the week following.

There indeed existed between master and men a cheery *camaraderie* totally different from the usual status of employer and employed. The factory was more like some private guild, in which there was a community of interest. Each man recognized that he was part of a great whole in which the humblest worker was necessary to the success at which all alike aimed; and from the smallest boy employed in laying ground and colour and glaze on the plain tiles and brick facings, each member of that little fraternity was inspired with a feeling of personal pride in, and personal responsibility for, their united achievement. Nor was there one who did not share in the triumph when the master pronounced his satisfaction over some rare and lovely specimen which had issued in glowing perfection from its ordeal

by fire. Yet De Morgan's highest praise was usually a boyish expression of delight. 'That is very jolly!' he would say briefly; and only the vibration in his voice would reveal the strain of past tension, and the inexpressible joy of the creator in the thing victoriously created.

At this date, De Morgan did not make his own biscuit; he employed for his lustre-ware large dishes such as were exported to Persia and India for use as rice dishes, while the tiles and pots were mostly painted on a red clay body which came from Poole, Dorset, or was supplied by the Stourbridge Fire Clay Co., though a few were made with clay from the Battersea Crucible Works. All tiles manufactured by him during this period, however, may be distinguished from those of a later date by the raised bars on the reverse side. Meanwhile, like William Morris, he lamented the appearance of London houses—dull buildings in a dull atmosphere, from which the soot-grime could only be removed by the tiresome process of re-painting. It ought to be practicable, Morris maintained, to clean all houses in a dirty city by turning on a hose; and to De Morgan it seemed that the only exterior decoration at once suitable and picturesque under such conditions were tiles, which were at once gay and washable, if only they could be made to resist the vagaries of a changeable climate.

'At some date in the early seventies,' he wrote later, 'I was struck by the fact that the employment of tiles in European buildings never approached in extent the use that I have always understood has been made of them in other countries, especially in Persia. This seemed particularly noticeable in external work. In my frequent conversations with architects, I noticed that the reason invariably alleged for this last was that the tiles would not bear the frost or hold tight on cement or mortar. Observation confirmed this. I also remarked that tiles pointed at as having these defects were always the pressed dust tiles, or Minton tiles (so-called, because the invention of the press was either Herbert Minton's, or because he bought the patent). In time I came to the conclusion that the artificially compacted clay differed in molecular structure from that of natural shrinkage from the wet. It is more absorbent, or rather absorbs with greater capillary attraction (for I doubt the same bulk of pressed tile absorbing as much water as one of ours; but I don't know). Of course I did not then *know* that tiles I made myself from wet clay *would* stand frost and wet. I only believed it.'

Thus De Morgan, having found that it was not much more expensive to make his own tiles than to buy them, experimented with diligence and discovered that clay such as he manufactured and baked personally would answer satisfactorily for purposes of external facing in architecture. The result of this conclusion will be referred to later.

Besides his experiments in this matter, his inventions in connexion with his work were many and various. He always designed his own kilns and chimneys; he planned a clever revolving grate; and he devoted much time to the construction of grinding mills. Amongst the sketches which he made in regard to the latter, one shows the grinding process from the breaking up of the grist to grinding to the finest powder. Another shows balls upon balls, from large series to small ones, grinding ever finer and finer. He further invented a process-painting in oils, in which glycerine, employed as a medium, was productive of a remarkable richness of colouring; also a new process of glass-stain; as well as a method of ceramic casting which obviated the loss of sharpness in the forms involved when covering over the design with a glaze—a loss noticeable in the Della Robbia ware.

Mr. Blunt points out how, 'contradictory as it sounds, it was perhaps, to some extent, the wide range of William De Morgan's inventive and creative ability which tended in a measure to hamper the success of the pottery. Apart altogether from the creation of designs, his chemical investigations into the qualities and kiln-behaviour of various bodies, calcines, frits, and glazes, and the practical improvements he introduced in the design of ovens and kilns, and the regulations of temperatures and draught, were of course an essential and most valuable part of the work. . . . But the versatile genius for contrivance and improvements which he inherited from his father was not, as he said, to be impounded, either æsthetically or technically; and was devoted impartially also to the evolution of telegraph codes, of tile pattern indexes, of systems of accounts, of machinery design, of stock reference lists, and other side issues which poorer brains could have tackled well enough. De Morgan's mind was ever full of original methods and ideas on all sorts of subjects . . . and he was always loath to accept preconceived systems of doing things until he had made trial of his own.'[1] Thus among his papers still exist bundles of carefully written treatises on mechanical questions covering an amazing variety of subjects, each disquisition revealing an astonishing grasp of the matter with which, for the time being, he was coping.

One of his former workmen, Mr. Bale, contributes some interesting recollections of these methods, which are best given in his own words:—

MR. BALE'S NARRATIVE.

'It is about fifty years ago I was sent to Mr. De Morgan, on the recommendation of Mr. William Morris, as painter. This

[1] *The Wonderful Village*, pp. 187–8.

was the first time I ever saw anything of tile and pottery work; everything was so strange and fascinating that it acted like a spell upon me, and I could not resist studying it night and day.

'Well, the first thing I had to do was to outline on a piece of glass the design in brown colour, same as is used in glass painting —I subsequently found out. This piece of glass with the design was fired, then given to me with sheets of tissue paper cut about 8 inches square, then a solution was made, tinted green. I had to dip the tissue paper in the solution, lay it on some blotting paper to take up the superfluous water, then I had to paint on the glass (with the design on it) a solution of gum and glycerine around the pattern, pick up the damp paper and lay it even over the design, then paint on the paper the design in different colours when thoroughly dry, then gently pull the paper off the glass and lay it aside to be eventually stuck down with a solution of soluble glass upon Dutch enamelled tiles. This was given to the kiln man who covered it with a powdered soft glass, then put it into the kiln to fire.

'Mr. De Morgan at this date often used Dutch enamel tiles, it was a long time before he made his own tiles. When he got his own (which were always made of fire-clay) he had to get a white ground, this white ground, or paste, was made of silica, and was the medium of sticking the paper paintings on to the tiles. This paste was extremely good; but unfortunately there was always likely to be trouble—and one which was hardly ever got over, as it used to split up in little holes, consequently they had to be touched up and re-fired. I maintain that this was the cause of a great deal of loss, and if it hadn't been for the vases and plaques in the lustre and Persian designs, he could never have kept on with the expensive business.

'Also he never painted straight on to the tiles, like the vases, he did them on tissue paper. . . . Every Persian vase, or nearly so, turned out in his pottery had a starting by his own hand; of course often he would supply drawings to be carried out by his painters,—but while he superintended the work he never allowed any of us to put our own designs on.

'I remember one occasion when I took it upon myself to break through this rule and finish a pot I had been all day at work on. Mr. De Morgan would begin a design, say with a flower or a bit of ornament, and then tell us to put just so many around; and we had to wait sometimes hours at a time before he came back, and meanwhile we did not dare to put another little bit here or there. Well, on this particular pot there was just a little space left to finish the design, and I had been waiting such a very long time that at last I didn't think it could make any difference if I just finished it the same as the rest. No sooner had I done it,

however, than he comes to finish it, and directly he says—"*Why did you put that in?*"

'I answered (quite simply), "I thought it wouldn't matter and would save time!"

'"*I thought!*" he repeated—"Please understand I don't pay you to think! If you think again, you must think elsewhere!"

'Ever after that I took care not to think, but calmly waited. It taught me a lesson for the future, although he wasn't cross about it. I must say he was a very kind-hearted man to all who worked for him, and always thinking of the welfare of his men.

'I remember seeing him make his own engravings for illustrations of a Nursery book written by his sister;[1] it was a very clever dodge—this is how it was done. He would get a sheet of window glass; upon that he spread a very thin coating of his paste, or white ground, which he used for his tiles, just simply let it dry, without heating it, and he then used a fine needle and scratched or engraved the subject, just as anyone would do an engraving on steel! And where he wanted greater depth in the block, he piled his paste high up. When all was then dried by the fire he pours over it, to the depth of a metal block, say three-quarters of an inch of molten sulphur or brimstone. This used to come clean away, and he would send this block of sulphur to the printers and they could print direct from it, but on account of the pressure they used to make a metal cast instead. I should very much like to get one of those Nursery books illustrated by him; they will be very valuable as a specimen of his work.

'I remember when he was experimenting to get a material for making mosaics he tried several times by spreading his paste on *both* sides of a sheet of window glass, baking it, and absolutely splitting the sheet in two. I also was trying with him at the same time, and he allowed me to take some of his tile-patterns or paintings on the tissue paper which I took to a man who made ink bottles, and got him to throw a sheet of molten glass over the papers on an iron plate; but it was not a success—no doubt if they had been rolled out while hot it would have been successful.

'Then I tried his paste upon a *wet* tile, and got Frank Iles, who was his kiln man, to fire it, and it came clean away; but Mr. De Morgan, being a chemist to the backbone, adopted it by using a solution that was always used for his mosaics.

'He and Mr. Morris tried a lot of mosaic work. The very first piece executed by Mr. De Morgan was a very large (almost life-size) mosaic; it took me about eight weeks to do. I believe he sent it to America. It was the Virgin sitting down with the

[1] *On a Pincushion*, by Mary De Morgan, published 1877.

Book open on her lap; the colours were simply magnificent—the dress a most beautiful blue.

'Mr. Morris was always coming round to get ideas from Mr. De Morgan, and would carry off his finest work. Mr. De Morgan just let him take it and never bothered. We used to hide fine pots sometimes, as we didn't like them going.

'There is a book in existence somewhere—perhaps stolen—a large book made out of brown paper with a number of small figures in white paper stuck on the brown by Mr. De Morgan. They were very wonderful.

'Mr. De Morgan was an extraordinary man, and could do anything he turned his mind to. I certainly think all the years I have known him he was the cleverest man I ever came across. But I wonder why it is that writers who write about lustres in England, never recognize him as he ought to be. I have just seen a book where all the modern (so-called) producers of lustre are highly spoken of, but he is just casually mentioned as one who did tiles; anyone would imagine from this that he was only a tile-maker, and didn't do fine pottery! That's all the thanks his countrymen give him after spending several fortunes on it not only in perfecting the Lustre, but being, I maintain, the first to revive that beautiful lost Art, as well as improving on the glorious Persian colouring—absolutely, I may say, giving it away—actually showing others how to do the Lustre. Yet not a writer has yet given him his due!

'Another book I have read about Lustres—well, it seems to me they don't know anything about it, because what they call *Copper* Lustre is nothing more nor less than *Gold* Lustre—they don't know the difference! I maintain Mr. De Morgan's copper and moonlight, or silver Lustre, is the true style that Gubbio did. A lot of people think that the Majolica is made from copper, but this is easily tested in a very simple way without injuring the lustre, by just putting the tiniest spot of Fluoric acid on it—if it is copper it will immediately turn green; if gold, or any other, it will turn brown or muddy colour.'

We shall have occasion to refer again to the reminiscences of Mr. Bale, who, it must be added, states that he was never allowed by his master to see the firing process. For the present it may be well to glance at De Morgan's own account of the technical side of his work. In 1892 he read a paper before the Society of Arts for which he was given the Gold Medal, and although this belongs to a date later than the period with which we are now dealing, yet it epitomizes his efforts from the commencement of his career. It shows convincingly, moreover, not only his mastery of the chemical and mechanical details connected with that work, but his profound knowledge of the

evolution of the whole Art of Pottery from almost prehistoric times. For although still fond of describing himself lightly as a dabbler in ceramics, he was, as in all else to which he devoted attention—no trifler, and his eager craftsmanship never resulted in a corresponding superficiality of method. After tracing the development of both experiment and achievement in Lustre from the remote ages, he remarks :—

'In the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which is a sort of death register of the arts of antiquity, not a hint of lustred pottery appears. The modern revivals began with those at the Ginori factory at Doccia near Florence, and those of Carocci at Gubbio. . . . (A story is told by Marchese Brancaleone of the re-discovery at Gubbio, that an old painted unfired piece, of the Giorgio time, was found in what was supposed to be his old kiln house. One of these fell into a scaldino, and remained in contact with the fuel. Next day it was found that a lustre had developed on it !)

'In spite of the Doccia and Gubbio reproductions, an impression continued to prevail that the process was a secret. I used to hear it talked about among artists, about twenty-five years ago, as a sort of potter's philosopher's stone. At that date the attempts to reproduce it in England had met with only very partial success, although an Italian had gone the round of the Staffordshire potteries showing how to do it. Even now it is sometimes spoken of as a secret by newspaper writers. My attention was attracted to some very interesting work of Massier, of Cannes, in the last Paris Exhibition, by a newspaper paragraph headed " Re-discovery of a Lost Art."

'In fact re-discovery appears to have dogged the footsteps of the lustres from the beginning. I re-discovered them myself in 1874 or thereabouts, and in the course of time some of my employés left me, and re-discovered them again somewhere else !—I do not think any re-discoveries of this sort contributed in any way to the very general diffusion of the process in the potteries at this moment. . . . Perhaps we may make a new departure and consider that the process is as well known as any other process in the arts ; at any rate I will contribute what I can to make it so, by telling all I know of it myself.

'I got nothing from Piccolpasso, as I did not see the work till long after, nor from any printed information, except the chemical manuals I had read in youth. The clue was furnished by the yellow stain of silver on glass. When over-fired this shows iridescence, which is often visible on the opaque yellow visible from the outside on stained-glass windows. I tried the stain on Dutch tiles, and found them unsusceptible in the glass kiln, but in a small glass muffle, I found that both copper and silver gave a lustre when the gas was damped down so as to penetrate the muffle. I pursued my investigation, and after an interruption occasioned by setting the house on fire and burning the roof off, I developed the process in Chelsea. This was in 1873–4, since which time it has not varied materially, although I have tried many experiments, with a view to improving it.'[1]

With regard to these experiments which, at the date when this paper was read, had extended over a period of twenty years, the reader is recommended to study De Morgan's own account,

[1] 'Lustre-ware,' by William De Morgan. *Journal of the Society of Arts*, pp. 761–763, June 24, 1892.

which sufficiently proves—modestly as he would have deprecated this conclusion—the tireless patience, ingenuity and learning which he had brought to bear upon this subject. 'As far as the technical difficulties of simply evolving a copper or a silver lustre go,' he says, 'I see no reason why, as in the case of the Arabs and Italians, every discovery should not be totally unconnected with every other.' And assuring his audience that if 'anyone sees his way to using the materials to good purpose, my experience, which I regard as an entirely chemical and mechanical one, is quite at his disposal,' he states :—

'As we now practise it [the lustre process] it is as follows. The pigment consists simply of white clay mixed with copper scale or oxide of silver, in proportion varying according to the strength of colour we desire to get. It is painted on to the already fused glaze with water, and enough gum-arabic to harden it for handling and make it work easily—a little lamp-black, or other colouring matter, makes it pleasanter to work with. I have tried many additions to this pigment . . . but without superseding the first simple mixture. . . .'

But although De Morgan repudiated the idea that the art of reproducing the old lustre-ware was extinct till he revived it, the consensus of opinion unhesitatingly attributes its recrudescence to his efforts,[1] as was also the revival of the beautiful old Persian ware, with its wonderful blues and greens, so vivid in hue that they pale all colours with which they come in contact.[2] Still more is the fact now being accepted that he was the greatest ceramic artist whom England has produced, not excepting Wedgwood, who, in certain technical details, and, above all, in mastery of design, failed to attain to the high level reached by De Morgan. At the date, however, when the latter read the

[1] The *Encyclopædia Britannica* in a long article on 'Pottery' published before De Morgan attained to the zenith of his career, stated :—

'Mr. De Morgan of Chelsea and Merton has perhaps made the greatest advances of all, having re-discovered the way to make and use the beautiful thickly-glazed blues and greens of the old Persian ware.

'He uses these splendid colours in designs conceived and drawn with the old spirit, but of sufficient originality to make them a real stage in the development of Ceramic Art; not a mere archæological revival of styles and methods which have long since ceased to have a significance and life of their own.'

Mr. Ashbee, Civic Adviser to the City of Jerusalem, also remarks :—

'Much of the decorative work in such places as the Dome of the Rock consist of wonderfully glazed tiles. The secret of this work was lost and you can see how far the Staffordshire people are from recovering it. There has only been one Englishman who knew anything about it, and that was William De Morgan.'

[2] The present writer has in her possession the original Persian tile which first suggested to De Morgan the idea of the wonderful colours of the ancient pottery—a tile *circa* 1400, with inch-thick Silurian earth still attached to the back; and the depth of its rich, limpid colour is in no way distinguishable from De Morgan's reproductions.

BOTTLE WITH BULBOUS BODY AND LONG NECK,
painted in blue, in two shades of lustre, with ships in a sea-fight
Mark, W. De Morgan, Fulham. F.P.
Height, 23 inches. Diameter, 10 inches.
WILLIAM DE MORGAN FECIT
At the Victoria and Albert Museum.

paper to which we have been referring, one of his audience, Mr. Forbes Robertson, pointed out that 'Mr. De Morgan was an example such as one rarely met with, of a combination of artistic training and a scientific habit of mind; it was for lack of artistic training that our craftsmen in the applied Arts had hitherto, in a great measure, failed to produce the artistic results which were so much to be desired,' while Mr. Phene Spiers added:—

'He had had the pleasure of knowing Mr. De Morgan a great many years, and it was very seldom one met with such a combination of qualities—with scientific training, artistic perception, and a vivid imagination, all of which were apparent in his productions. It was interesting to notice how the scientific side of his character gave him such a mastery of the technical part of the process: while his artistic powers gave beauty to the objects produced. It was very fortunate for this branch of art that it was taken up by a man of so many-sided a nature.'[1]

The speaker at that date had little premonition of another strange development of De Morgan's 'many-sided nature' which the years were to bring; but there was one element in the potter's work wherein lay the true secret of its success, and this De Morgan himself did not minimize.

'I believe,' he concluded, 'we have learnt all there is to know of the chemical and mechanical side of the art, as it was known to the ancients. What remains to be discovered in order to produce original work, equal to that of the Renaissance, is not a technical mystery, but the secret of the spirit which animated the fifteenth century not only in Italy, but all through Europe. We have got the materials and many more, but the same causes that forbid the attainment of new beauty have stood between us and the revival of the old beauty. . . . Some day there may be a new imagery and a new art.'

And it was in a measure this 'new imagery and new art' which De Morgan himself inaugurated; for the element in his work which eluded all imitators—the stamp of an individual genius—could not be conveyed even by his generous willingness to share the result of his labours with other strivers.

It is indeed the psychology of the man as an artist even more than the technical triumph of the potter as a craftsman which makes the appeal to many lovers of the things he created. For in that work they read so unerringly the character of the worker—the mingling of poetry and fantasy, of idealism, of inexhaustible imagination, of irrepressible humour. The graceful sweeping lines, the delicate curves, the intricate ornamentation with which we are familiar—and in the elaboration of which almost as much loving care is devoted to the back of a plate as to the front—are all subordinate to some idea which

[1] Reprinted in the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, June, 1892.

seems half a jest and half a vision from the Fairy-land of childhood. Goggle-eyed fish, swimming in stiff procession through curving waves, provide the essential foreground to some weird ship of ingenious construction which dominates the scene. In one design, a shark is rising out of the water to stare at a vessel the bird figure-head of which returns the gaze with an uncanny suggestion of consciousness. In other sea-pieces, such as he loved, the sea-serpent and uncouth creatures of the deep entwine or peer through patterned tracery accentuating the mystery of things marine. On a dish of different suggestion, in colouring like the soft haze of some 'forest primeval,' a dragon, all shimmering azure and silver scales, sits biting his own tail amid interlacing purple grapes. Fantastic beasts, with an anatomy all their own and a sinister menace wholly convincing, are as instinct with life and motion as are Landseer's faithful reproductions from Nature itself. Prancing horses, graceful stags, charging bulls, fierce tigers, playful elephants, distorted into grotesque outline and utilized either as a central idea or as part of a scheme of decoration, vie with birds of equally bizarre conception. Owls and vultures glow redly like a materialization of the ruddy flames into which the pottery was once thrust; eagles, there are, every plume of which shades to a glory of changing colour; peacocks, the pompous conceit of which provokes laughter; storks in prim array; ducks striding through a tangle of trailing foliage, with outspread wings glinting in gold and silver. Yet all are monsters straight from Wonderland; all seem reminiscent of that little child of the *Nursery Journal* with his 'petèn' world peopled with creatures transformed from reality by the magic of his tiny brain. And other plates and pots might be cited, of which the charm is still more elusive—opalescent plates which seem an iridescent compound of moonlight and rainbow; silver plates which shade to blue; powder-blue which shade to amber and mauve; copper which glow with the radiance of metal, then pale like vanishing fairy gold—infinite in colour and design, the versatility of the master-mind which created them is always apparent.

But, out of her own heritage of art and poetry, few have caught the true measure of De Morgan's inspiration as has Miss Morris. Through and beyond the mere dexterity of hand and ingenuity of brain, she can feel the spirit which permeates the whole—which to her seems to reach out from a far past and to stretch forward to an unfathomable future:—

'A man's change of style, as his outer and inner self change in the journey through life, is always a matter to be noted. De Morgan's designs show types developing from the simple and occasionally naïve work of the early Cheyne Row time to the bold mid-period with big strong masses enriched with smaller ornament, and thence to the later work, elaborate

and intricate and full of curious invention. The time when he was studying the finest of the potter's art at its source produced some splendid echoes of Asia Minor and Persian types, and later, his passion for the sea expressed itself in patterns that have to my mind a curious relation with Mycenæan work. No one would call it an attempt at reproduction; it is rather as if the same forms suggested the same type of ornament to inventors so far sundered in time and space, as though the same impulse towards sea things, the same passion for the twilight gardens of the deep, had moved the nineteenth-century craftsman and those dwellers around the Middle Sea.

'Some of the decorations on the pots and vases . . . are wonderfully subtle both in form and colour; two designs are specially in my mind: one (a pot) has a ground of green-white, on which is a lustre fish under a network of green-white; another (a vase) has a pale pinkish lustre ground and lustre figures under a scale pattern of white. The atmospheric impression obtained by this plane upon plane is remarkable, and the simplified concentration of the symbol-drawing stimulates imagination and produces the feeling of reality—the vivid dream-realism which is more especially the possession of artist and poet. The deeps of the sea—fishes seen behind clustering sea-weed in a pale green light—are suggested in several of these "plane upon plane" patterns. . . . The finest periods of art give us, in textiles, in ceramics and other crafts, countless examples of one pattern laid upon another, but I cannot at the moment recall any example of note in which the slighter, mechanical pattern, reversing the usual practice, is used as a veil for the principal design. I hope it is not straining a point to dwell on this feature in some of De Morgan's patterns; the suggestion of an *essential* seen through shimmering water or other screen of detail; it occurs to me as a quite unconscious expression—perhaps notable only to anyone on the look out for such expressions—of the reaching through a tangle to things that count: peering through the ordered pattern of trivial matters to the real life behind. This is doubtless reading big significance into a small decorative effort, and one is far from desiring the primrose by the river's brim to be anything but a primrose; but as half the beliefs of long-dead races are embodied in the symbol drawing of their "decorative art" (to use the tiresome phrase in mere shorthand parlance) one may be forgiven for pausing over any indication that seems to link the searchings of a modern mind with the searchings of the ancient world.

'The special bent of De Morgan's invention was in winding beast-forms and great sweeping lines round difficult shapes; the more difficult the space to be filled and the more fantastic the beast-pattern, the more enjoyment is evident. The story told is vivid and apt . . . many an episode of the drama of nature has been concentrated into the symbol drawing, the first word, and it may be the latest, in all human decoration of life on this earth. One design for a plate he has named "Stranded fish," a monstrous creature taking up one-half of the circle, while the other is occupied by tiny men in tiny boats hurrying to secure the spoil. Another he labels "Sea-birds' Island," another "The Snake-eater," another shows a lizard dancing gaily on his tail and smiling. These and many others are racy jokes—and so De Morganesque in their daring and enjoyment! Among the designs for tiles may be noted a splendid wild boar, an amazing chameleon, a serpent charming a rabbit, a frankly-bored leopard—a handsome beast, and a hippo shedding absurd giant tears. There is a spoonbill, too, trying to get its bill into a De Morgan pot (with a background of Chelsea Church and the factory chimneys of the Surrey side of the Thames).

'The freedom of his studies for designs puts them (if I may once more

note the comparison) on a level with the spirited drawing of Mediterranean ancient art. Some bird-drawings, in two sweeps of the brush, have a Chinese swiftness and crispness. . . . In the midst of all this rich and varied decorative invention one comes upon pots and vases which are severely simple—just a fine spacing of dark and light, and a sightly disposition of some plain line-and-spot bordering. They are masterly in their effect of noble emphasis.

'The colouring of this ware, with its Eastern force and depth, needs no description, though one may note the principal colours used, the polychromatic pieces have a magnificent dark blue, and real malachite green; of course a manganese purple of that uneven "atmospheric" quality that is familiar in Eastern art; an Indian red is used, also orange, but more rarely, and a pure lemon yellow; black, of course, of different depths. These are the usual colours; but to name them is to give no idea of their quality and arrangement—to tell how the jewel-like birds fly across a blue-black sky, how the pallid fish shine through green water; how the turquoise and purple flowers star the wooded lawns, how the python glitters in his forest lair; such is our potter's handling of incomparable material.'[1]

The quotation from the above article is given at some length in order to convey adequately the happy manner and matter of it. Meanwhile, to summarize certain conclusions, two points may be emphasized. First, that in De Morgan's successful productions there is a peculiar softness combined with brilliance to which none of his imitators have attained. Secondly, that a noticeable sense of life and suppleness is characteristic of all the living forms which he represents, and renders them easily distinguishable from the work of other artists by whom such types are utilized as a mere form of inanimate decoration. Even a superficial observer may remark that the most grotesque bogey De Morgan ever painted is *alive* and can boast an individuality all its own!

Further, much has been said at all times respecting the

[1] 'William De Morgan.' Article in the *Burlington Magazine*, August and September, 1917, by Miss May Morris.

'secret' of De Morgan's process; yet, as far as he was concerned this 'secret'—the outcome of experiment with pigments and close study extending over forty years—was one which he was always ready to share with fellow-workers. Only to the idle inquirer who believed himself about to fathom a possible source of wealth, did De Morgan ever turn a deaf ear.

A story runs that one day a man of this description tried diplomatically to learn the process employed by De Morgan. 'I wish you would describe to me how you first set to work?' he said.

And De Morgan told him.

'And what do you do next?' said the friend.

Again De Morgan told him.

'And finally?' asked the questioner, scarcely able to keep the note of triumph out of his voice.

'Oh—finally?' said De Morgan with engaging ingenuousness, '*finally*, you see, I just label the thing two-and-sixpence—and it doesn't sell!'

In truth his wife that was to be, in the years that were to come, solved and defined the mystery which baffled the uninitiated. 'The secret,' she said, in answer to a similar inquiry, 'is—William himself!'

Pencil Sketch in a Note-Book by William De Morgan.

CHAPTER V

THE MERTON PERIOD

1881–1885

IT must not be imagined from the foregoing chapter that De Morgan's increasing success in the manufacture of pottery was accompanied by any corresponding financial prosperity. From the humble beginning when he experimented with a solitary workman to aid him, to the stage when he kept a factory going with a number of employees and busy kilns at work, marked an advance due solely to his enthusiasm and energy. To run an experimental business such as he was doing, with no substratum of capital—a business, moreover, which required a never-ceasing outlay and weekly cash payments—was to live perpetually on the brink of a precipice; and with his complete absence of any commercial instinct, it is only surprising that he so far succeeded in balancing expenditure and receipts as to be able to keep disaster at bay. 'It is not well organized,' he said once quaintly of his factory, 'it is very ill de-morganized, in fact!' and characteristic stories still survive of his method of dealing with prospective purchasers which are curiously reminiscent of the conduct of his grandfather, William Frend, when the latter emptied his wine-casks in the streets of Canterbury.

One day a millionaire arrived in the show-room at Orange House full of anxiety to choose some handsome pot—the more expensive the better. De Morgan himself wandered round with the would-be purchaser, pointing out some of his most successful achievements. Then an idea occurred to him. 'What do you want it for?' he queried.

'I want it for a wedding present.'

'Is it for So-and-so's wedding?' inquired De Morgan, naming a big function which was to take place the following week.

'Yes,' was the rejoinder.

'Oh, my dear chap,' exclaimed De Morgan with anxiety, 'don't give the bride any more of my pots—she's *inundated* with them! You take my advice—just go round to Mappin & Webb's and choose her a nice useful piece of silver. She'll like it ever so much better!'

The prospective customer, somewhat amazed, thanked De Morgan for his disinterested suggestion, and hurried off to choose a piece of silver.

On another occasion a man came intending to give a large order for some tiles with zoological designs.

'What do you want them for?' asked De Morgan.

'It is to tile my nursery,' was the reply. 'They would be washable and clean.'

'Oh, if *that's* what you want them for,' said De Morgan, 'do let me advise you—my tiles, you see, would come expensive, and they chip very easily. Just you go to Minton—he provides a nice cheap tile quite good enough for your purpose, and it would save you no end of money!'

Again a grateful customer departed—to spend his money elsewhere.

Nor did De Morgan play his cards well when other opportunities offered. On one occasion a Royal Lady signified her gracious desire to inspect his pottery. Having walked through his showroom, she purchased a tile worth a pound and asked for the loan of a panel worth fifty, the design of which she wished to copy.

'I would suggest,' said De Morgan firmly, 'that you first copy the tile you have bought, and by that time I shall know if I can spare the panel."

The Princess took the hint—and her departure; but De Morgan's methods sufficiently demonstrate why his *succès d'estime* was slow to assume the guise of more tangible assets.

Nevertheless, to all who knew him, his inherent simplicity of character seemed as inevitable a part of a unique personality as were his originality of outlook and quaint, dreamy fashion of speech. Of the latter—enhanced by the long intervals of silence which had won him the name of the Mouse—it has already been pointed out that it is impossible to convey any adequate impression, since the happy nonsense of his remarks, reduced to paper and print, loses its peculiar merriment. But the ripple of laughter which followed him through this grey world still finds an echo in the hearts of his friends.

A few stories may be quoted at random.

Anything peculiar in names always arrested his attention. On hearing one day that Mrs. Burne-Jones was going to Nettleship to have her eyes tested, he observed reflectively, 'I wonder how Nettleship likes to be addressed—" Yes, your Nettleship! " and " No, your Nettleship! "' Another day, after an animated conversation had been going on around him for some time, in which he took no part—remaining throughout apparently absorbed in thought—a friend at last ventured to ask him what he was thinking of. All present expected to hear that he had been revolving some abstruse problem connected with his work,

and his answer came as a shock: 'I was thinking,' he said seriously, 'how expensive it would be for a centipede if it wore boots!'

On another occasion, watching the multitude of twittering sparrows disporting themselves in a London garden, he observed, 'What a pity they can't all be inoculated with the song of nightingales!'

Once when he was staying in the country with his old friend Henry Holiday, who was now married, wandering round the hall he noticed an elaborate barometer hanging on the wall. In the centre was written, *Admiral Fitzroy's remarks*; and on the left, '*When falling*'; on the right, '*When rising*.' Suddenly, into the midst of the desultory conversation at the other end of the hall, penetrated a small thoughtful voice from the spot where De Morgan stood: 'I *should* have thought that Admiral Fitzroy's remarks "When falling" would have been more forcible!'

During his visit, Mrs. Holiday mentioned to him several novels which she thought it might interest him to read; and thinking afterwards that he might not remember the right titles, she sent him a written list. He wrote back thanking her politely for her kindness, but concluded blandly: 'I haven't the slightest intention of reading any one of the books you mention!'

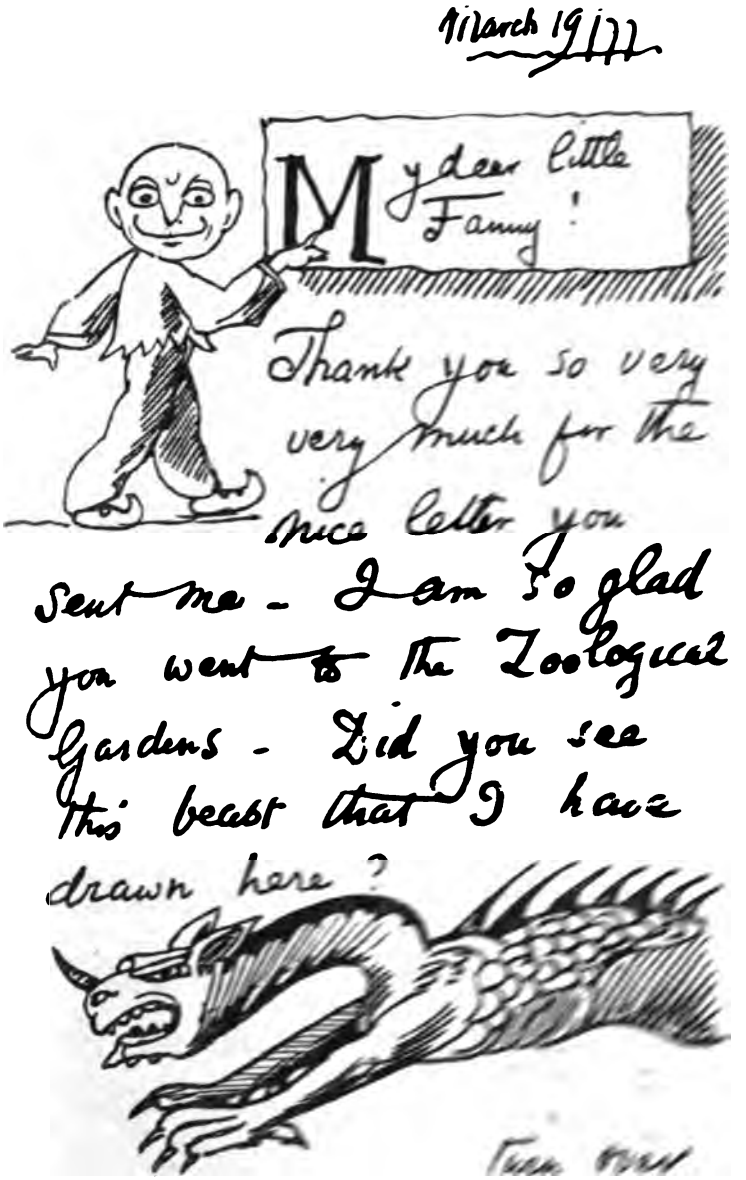
Another time she knitted him a scarf for his neck; and on again writing to express his thanks, he remarked: 'I shall never now be able to say that I don't care a (w)rap about anything!'

One day she was present with him at a private view of some pictures by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale. The place was crowded, so that it was almost impossible to move, and smartly dressed people, who had ostensibly come to see the Exhibition, were treating it as a social function, standing about talking, devouring sandwiches and drinking tea, with their backs turned brazenly to the beautiful works upon the walls. Mrs. Holiday remarked upon this feature of the gathering to William De Morgan, and he smiled a little sadly. 'Yes,' he said, 'there is all the difference in the world between the *élite* and the *elect*!'

On another occasion he went with her to see some new fabrics of artistic design which were being exhibited at Morris's. The shopmen gave themselves considerable airs, and behaved towards the two inquirers with a condescension which De Morgan resented. 'I wish to Goodness,' he observed with unusual asperity as he walked away, 'that they would not treat us as if they were all Ptolemies!'

Passing the window of a well-known shop Mrs. Holiday once saw there displayed some of Maw's pottery masquerading as De Morgan ware. Entering, she remonstrated warmly with the shopman upon the iniquity of trying to palm off any works of

art upon the public under a wrong name ; but failing to convince the man of his error, she wrote indignantly to ask De Morgan to [illegible] wrote back



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art upon the public under a wrong name; but failing to convince the man of his error, she wrote indignantly to ask De Morgan to interfere in the matter. '*I* shan't bother!' he wrote back placidly; 'imitation is the sincerest form of pottery!'

'In the matter of riddles,' recalls Miss Holiday, 'he was quite without shame. A few drift across my recollection in their boyish foolishness. "Why is a serpent like the dome of Saint Paul's?" "Because it *h(is)s*!" "Why is an Archbishop cut in halves like a man recovering from a faint?" "Because he's comin' to (two)."' On one occasion he said he had invented an excellent answer but could not find a question to it. The whole completed ran thus:—

> 'Where did Ovid meet Julia's father?
> Ovid Methimathisorffices.'

But one feature of De Morgan's conversation never underwent any change in youth or age. In his presence no one was allowed to pursue a quarrel, and if the talk became ill-natured, he usually contrived to change the topic, or to rob it of its venom. On one occasion some people had been adversely discussing the character of a well-known man, and De Morgan, for a time, maintained silence. At length he interrupted: 'I cannot think,' he said, 'why you are all so down on poor C. R., except'—apologetically—'that he is *unmarried to a Dutch lady*!'

During the early part of De Morgan's career he snatched little time for relaxation; nevertheless, the atmosphere of his home-life, with its constant influx of visitors, social, scientific and artistic, formed an essential part of his environment, as did the constant companionship of his sister Mary.

From a brusque, clever child, the latter had grown into a talented woman, who amused people by her witty sayings and quick repartees. In appearance she was in marked contrast to her brother, being small and slight, with china-blue eyes and regular features, while her quick, sharp voice accentuated a somewhat abrupt manner.

As already mentioned, De Morgan, in 1877, illustrated a book of Fairy Tales published by her, entitled *On a Pincushion*. She afterwards published *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde*, illustrated by Walter Crane, and other children's books, the last of which, *The Wind Fairies*, published in 1900, was dedicated to Angela, Dennis and Clare Mackail, the grandchildren of Burne-Jones. In 1887 she also brought out anonymously a striking novel of which her brother suggested the title—*A Choice of Chance*. It is an intricate and unusual plot, well told, and with the interest cleverly sustained throughout; but unfortu-

nately she published it under the pseudonym 'William Dobson,' adopting the surname of her grandfather's family, and thus sacrificing much of the interest which would have attached to it had she sent it out into the world under her own name. Unreasonably disappointed at its reception, she never wrote another; but the gift of story-telling was evidently in the family; and Sophia De Morgan, whose realistic and graphic writing has already been remarked, was herself the author of a work of fiction which she never published. William, on the contrary, at this date never wrote anything except a few desultory verses scribbled in jest. All the accounts later promulgated respecting early manuscripts written by him and destroyed are entirely without foundation.

Besides her gift of penmanship, Mary De Morgan was accredited with a remarkable power of fortune-telling which she used to exercise for the private amusement of her friends. While her brother was still at 40 Fitzroy Square, Miss Laura Hertford, who occupied the upper part of the house, gave a party to about a dozen people, at which were present Mary and Annie De Morgan, with William, and Mr. Sandwick, who relates the following stories:

Meeting Mary for the first time on this occasion, he had his hand told by her, and on seeing it she exclaimed: 'But you ought not to be here! Your Line of Life is broken just before this date! However, as you *are* here, it must indicate that you have recently had a most narrow squeak of your life.' 'This was true,' testifies Mr. Sandwick; 'about six months before my doctor had given me up, with a possible four-and-twenty hours to live!'

At the same party a more remarkable incident occurred. Mary was asked to 'tell' the hand of a house surgeon from University College Hospital, and while glibly predicting his fate, she paused abruptly and refused to say more. After he was gone, her friends, feeling convinced from her manner that she had deliberately left untold something she had seen, begged her to say what this was. 'I saw that he dies from drowning,' she said, 'and that his fiancée is also drowned by the capsizing of a boat at sea, which he will witness from the shore.' Little over a year after both events occurred; and the man was drowned at the same spot as the girl to whom he was engaged.

Another time, however, when she was telling fortunes at a bazaar, a stranger came to have his hand read. Mary foretold him a future full of picturesque incidents, one of these being that he would go to another country, and would there meet with a carriage accident, in consequence of which he would fall in love with, and marry, a girl whom he would rescue from beneath the horses' hoofs. Years afterwards a man whom she did not recognize came up to Mary at a party and introduced himself. 'I

have always wanted to meet you again,' he said. 'Long ago you told my fortune with an amount of detail. It all came true! I went to India, I there met with a carriage accident; I rescued a girl from beneath the horses' hoofs, and I married her. Everything else that you told me has happened.' 'I suppose,' said Mary De Morgan, 'that you will not believe me if I tell you that, at that time I knew nothing about palmistry—I hadn't studied it at all—but my friends bullied me to help them, and as it was for charity, I did it. Everything that I told you was just chance—I made it up out of my head as I went along!' 'Then if you weren't a palmist, you are clairvoyante!' exclaimed the man, unconvinced; 'it could not be mere coincidence.'

The younger generation of De Morgans had carried on the tradition started by their parents, and were greatly interested in uncanny occurrences and psychical research. They did not, however, regard such investigations with the profound seriousness exhibited by their mother, and indeed they inherited from their father an absence of bias and a keen sense of humour in which she was perhaps lacking. It says much, therefore, for the perfect harmony existing between her and her son that she did not resent the frivolity with which he occasionally treated what to her were matters of the utmost gravity.

On one occasion she returned from a walk greatly perturbed. 'I have been in Battersea Park,' she announced to a casual visitor ominously, 'and I had a terrible shock—I came face to face with William's wraith!'

'Just one of Ma's Bogies!' explained William in his high falsetto.

On another occasion she was describing how, in a particular alley in the neighbourhood, passers-by after dark complained that things were hurled at them from over a high wall 'by evil spirits.' 'Why not by some grubby little boy?' queried William, at once effectually disposing of undue interest in the phenomena.

In like manner Mary occasionally made jest of matters which to her mother were entirely convincing. In one instance when the subject of Spiritualism was under discussion in a room full of earnest believers, all profoundly impressed with their individual experiences, she threw her evidence into the opposite scale with a decisiveness which descended upon her audience with the effect of a bomb-shell. 'I was at a séance lately,' she announced in her clear, penetrating voice, 'and there were seven people present. Each of them had recently lost a relation, and they had come to communicate with the deceased. There was a materialization, and each of the seven persons at once recognized it to be the relation he or she had lost. They all began to quarrel when anyone else claimed it, and in the end all became violently abusive. *I* saw in it only the medium dressed up!'

At that date, however, there was a great mania for all Spiritualistic phenomena. Table-turning, introduced from America *circa* 1854 and at first a subject of ridicule, had since become a fashionable pastime in which believers and unbelievers alike dabbled for their entertainment so that the craze for séances was universal.

While living in Cheyne Row, the De Morgans had for many years a young servant who exhibited peculiar mediumistic powers, and who was much in request at their experiments in this connexion. Anxious to avoid all possible chance of trickery, William once jestingly begged the 'spirits' to transfer the rapping from the table at which they were seated to a cupboard on the other side of the room. This promptly took place, all subsequent raps sounding loudly from that isolated article of furniture. It may be added that the servant-girl in question died of consumption at the age of twenty-seven, and for three years before her death all mediumship deserted her; although she was on one occasion offered ten pounds by a visitor to exhibit her former powers, she was entirely unable to do so.

Apart from her Spiritualistic investigations, Sophia De Morgan was much interested in mesmerism, which she practised as a healing factor, and respecting which she relates the following :—

'About the year 1849, or earlier, I mesmerized a girl of eleven-and-a-half years old for fits, which she had had from birth. Her mother was epileptic; but I have no medical statement of the nature of the girl's complaint. She was very ignorant and stupid, never having been able to learn, owing to her bad health, The mother was a poor char-woman or laundress, also stupid. but honest.

'The girl became clairvoyante soon after the treatment began; but her lucidity was very uncertain. I never had reason to believe in its occurrence except on five or six occasions, on five of which it was so thoroughly proved that imposture was out of the question. I mean that she saw and reported things of which it was *impossible* for her to have obtained any knowledge in her normal state. . . . She had also the faculty of mental travelling, which she showed plainly at least four times.

'The girl became very ill after the treatment had gone on for a few weeks; and not knowing how to proceed, I wrote to Dr. Elleston, describing the case and her symptoms, and asking his advice. He told me to persevere without fear, as it was probably a crisis and would end in recovery. I went on accordingly, until, a day or two after, a discharge of water from the head completely relieved her, and she had no more fits. She entirely lost her susceptibility to Mesmerism after this time.

'I also mesmerized a woman who was pronounced incurable by Mr. R. Quain and other University College doctors. (Mr.

Quain's words to my husband were, "The woman *must* die.") *She was cured in about three months.* She became perfectly rigid after a few passes, and I could then hang a 12 lb. weight for some minutes on her extended arm.'

These experiments took place when William was a small boy; but in 1877, Dr. Carpenter, in his famous book on *Mesmerism, Spiritualism, etc.*, gave a misleading account of the proceedings and particularly of the Professor's attitude towards them. William forthwith, in a spirited correspondence, convicted Dr. Carpenter of error, and forced him to retract, and apologize for, his misstatements.

In 1882, Sophia De Morgan published a Memoir of her husband; and previous to its appearance William found himself again involved in an unexpected controversy. Throughout his life, one of his abiding characteristics remained an unwavering devotion to, and admiration of, his father; finding therefore the accuracy of the latter called in question, he once more took up the cudgels in defence of the Professor's memory.

On November 5, 1864, Augustus De Morgan had reviewed in the *Athenæum* Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Biology*, treating the work with less deference than the author held to be its due. Seeing that the Professor had omitted to quote in full his 'proximate definition of Life,' Spencer, in his *Study of Sociology*, drew attention to the fact, sharply criticizing 'the perversity of Professor De Morgan's judgments' and his 'recklessness of misrepresentation.' Those who wish to study a fair statement of both sides of the controversy can refer to the *Memoir of Augustus De Morgan*, where, on page 162, they will find the case set forth clearly by William De Morgan for insertion in his mother's book; but the duel which ensued privately between himself and the angry philosopher would fill a bulky pamphlet. Spencer at last consented to remove the offending passage on the following terms:—

'. . . as I do not wish to give needless pain to any member of the late Professor De Morgan's family, I will, in an edition now going through the press, omit that part to which you refer.

'In the small edition, however, which is stereotyped, all I can do is to alter the plate, and replace this passage by a less specific statement—one in which Prof. De Morgan's defect of judgment is commented upon in general terms. That he was prone to direct a microscopic attention to some one element of a question, and, while so doing, to ignore other elements lying around, is a fact which not I only have observed, but which I have heard remarked by sundry others. Much injustice, I doubt not quite unintentional, has, in his criticisms, resulted from this peculiarity.'

William De Morgan to Herbert Spencer.

'*June* 8, 1880.

'I am quite convinced that you would not willingly give pain to anyone—but the doctrine that the feelings of survivors ought to be spared

would interfere so seriously with free criticism of the works of deceased authors, that I for one should never urge it nor be a party to its adoption. Better apply the knife freely and when the constitution of the patient begins to suffer, it will be time to talk of sparing the feelings of bystanders.

'Your criticism of my father seems to me in some respects far from an unfair one as it now stands. But I should contend that it amounted to no more than this—that he was occasionally one-sided. I have noticed in the controversies in which he engaged that there was an appearance (to the uninitiated) that other parties were othersided.

'Perhaps if I were obliged to say exactly what my own experience of his method was, I should say that (when the choice lay between two such alternatives) he preferred to take a direct view of one side of a pyramid to the exclusion of the other three, rather than to place his eye at the apex, and so get an imperfect view of the three sides to the exclusion of the fourth—which is certainly not an uncommon way. But in matters where he was closely concerned, I think he was just as likely as others to walk all round the pyramid.

'As to his accuracy of quotation, I should never feel any misgiving whatever, in any sense short of ascribing to him infallibility.'

Over a year later De Morgan returned to the attack and drew from Spencer a letter which is of interest as it contains what he emphatically states to be his final definition of Life.

William De Morgan to Herbert Spencer.

'*September* 3, 1881.

'May I trouble you with an inquiry relating to the subject of our correspondence of last June twelvemonth.

'You will remember that the matter in question was a misquotation imputed by you to my father, the late Professor De Morgan.

'I wish to ascertain from you whether you called his attention at the time by letter or otherwise to the misapprehension contained in his review?

'I have not seen the more recent edition of your work but I presume it is out, and contains the note you were so good as to forward me in proof.

'I believe I have your final definition of Life accurately in my memory, but lest I should have wrongly accepted (as such) another proximate definition, will note it here, and perhaps you will kindly correct me if I am mistaken.—"*The continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.*" I trouble you on these points as I shall probably have an opportunity of touching on the subject in a forthcoming Memoir by my mother.'

Herbert Spencer to William De Morgan.

'*September* 20, 1881.

'SIR,—

'I have delayed replying to your note of September 3, because absence in the country, where I had no means of access to the *Principles of Biology*, prevented me from giving the exact words of the definition.

'It is well that you have, as you explain, taken the precaution of ascertaining whether you were right in supposing that the definition which you quote is the final one, since you would have, in another way, misrepresented the facts, had you quoted it without explanation. The definition which you quote, though it is one that I have finally given as a

brief and *abstract* form of the definition previously arrived at, and one which might be conveniently used for certain purposes, is nevertheless not the one which I decided upon as most specific and fitted for most general use. I have said that "so abstract a formula as this is scarcely fitted for our present purpose, and that its terms are to be reserved for such use as occasion may dictate." The definition which I have distinctly chosen for habitual use runs thus—Life is "the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, *in correspondence with external co-existence and sequences*." It is the last clause, here marked in italics, which was omitted in the proximate definition quoted by your father, and the absence of which makes all the difference in the meaning.

'Faithfully yours,

'HERBERT SPENCER.'

Some years afterwards, De Morgan had occasion to call on Herbert Spencer, and the interview was amicable on both sides. Spencer was at that time boarding in the house in Bayswater kept by three old ladies who, amongst his friends, went irreverently by the name of his harem. On his first taking up his residence with them, they considered it necessary to entertain him, and one of them laboriously set to work to enliven him with polite conversation. Spencer bore it with commendable patience for a space; but at last, interrupting the flow of platitudes, he observed pointedly, 'Madam, I am thinking how particularly well you would look seated under that tree in the garden yonder!' The lady took the hint and left the philosopher to ruminate at his own sweet will.

Not long afterwards a friend of De Morgan's remarked to Spencer facetiously, 'I hear that you have now a regular harem' [pronouncing this hare-em].

'I have nothing of the sort!' responded Spencer cantankerously.

'But De Morgan tells me that you yourself said so!'

'I said nothing of the kind!' reiterated Spencer caustically. 'What *I* said I had was a har-rēēm!'

But Spencer was not the only churlish philosopher with whom De Morgan crossed lances. He used often to go for walks with his neighbour, Thomas Carlyle, on which occasions he found great difficulty in understanding what that taciturn companion was saying, when at intervals he launched into conversation, so broad was his Scottish accent. On account of this known intimacy with the great man, De Morgan was deputed to invade him with a view to enlisting his sympathy in a scheme evolved by William Morris.

For long, Morris had seen and lamented the ruthless reconstruction, or rather destruction, of many national treasures of architecture and irreplaceable landmarks of history, while none had power to stay the hands of ignorant vandalism. This

was an evil which he realized could only be combated by some organized and permanent body which could make its influence felt, and he therefore inaugurated a 'Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings,' privately nicknamed by him 'The Anti-scrape.' He pressed De Morgan into the service, and one of the first undertakings which the latter was asked to tackle was to secure the coveted name of Carlyle as a member of the newly-fledged association. De Morgan set about his unwelcome task conscientiously, but with trepidation; and many years afterwards, for the benefit of Mr. Mackail, the son-in-law of Burne-Jones, he thus recorded his experiences:—

'... Just at the starting of the Society, Morris asked me to propose to Carlyle to become a member—I sent the prospectus to Carlyle through his niece, Miss Aitken, and afterwards called by appointment to elucidate further. The philosopher didn't seem in the mood to join anything—in fact it seemed to me that the application was going to be fruitless, but fortunately Sir James Stephen was there when I called, and Carlyle passed me on to him with the suggestion that I had better make *him* a convert first. However, Sir J. declined to be converted on the grounds that the owners or guardians of ancient buildings had more interest than anyone else in preserving them, and would do it, and so forth. I replied with a case to the contrary, that of Wren's churches and the Ecclesiastical Commissions. This brought Carlyle out with a panegyric of Wren, who was, he said, a really great man 'of extraordinary patience with fools,' and he glared round at the company reproachfully. However, he promised to *think it over*, chiefly, I think, because Sir J. F. S. had rather implied that the Society's object was not worth thinking over. He added one or two severe comments on the contents of space. I heard from his niece next day that he was wavering, and that a letter from Morris might have a good effect. I asked for one and received the following:—

'HORRINGTON HOUSE, *April* 3.

'MY DEAR DE MORGAN,—

'I should be sorry indeed to force Mr. Carlyle's inclinations on the matter in question; but if you are seeing him I think you might point out to him that it is not only artists or students of art that we are appealing to, but thoughtful people in general. For the rest it seems to me not so much a question whether we are to have old buildings or not, as whether they are to be old or sham old; at the lowest I want to make people see that it would surely be better to *wait* while architecture and the arts in general are in their present experimental condition before doing what can never be undone, and *may* at least be ruinous to what it intends to preserve.

'Yours very truly,
'WILLIAM MORRIS.'

The gist of what follows lies in the fact that Morris's prejudice

against the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was carried to a pitch of unreasonableness. The works of Wren and his successors were anathema to him; wherefore his feelings at one result of De Morgan's mission—and the manner in which his friends rejoiced at those feelings—may be dimly imagined.

'Next day,' continues De Morgan, 'I received from Miss Aitken a letter from Carlyle to the Society accepting membership. It made special allusion to Wren, and spoke of his city churches as *marvellous works*, the *like of which we shall never see again*, or nearly that. Morris had to read this at the first public meeting, you may imagine that he did not relish it, and one heard it in the way he read it—I fancy he added mentally, *and a good job too*!'

At the date of this letter, Mr. Mackail was collecting material for his Life of Morris, and De Morgan, then casting his mind back through a somewhat hazy past, was distressed to find that, out of the accumulated reminiscences of a lifetime, only trivial incidents concerning his early friendship with Morris still clung to his memory.

'I have a good deal of difficulty,' he continues, 'in recalling how much or how little I knew Morris before this date, which was, I suppose, '76. I first saw him in Red Lion Square . . . and I cannot reconcile it with reason that I knew him for ten years after that, and can recall nothing (by effort, at the moment—there's no knowing what may turn up), all through that period! Anyhow, memory is blank until the foundation of the Ancient Buildings, when I went to the first meeting at Q. Square. He asked me to come over to Horrington House, and one afternoon I went, and I remember he said plenty worth remembering, but—can't recollect what—indeed, I only recall that he denounced a beastly tin-kettle of a bell in a chapel close by, which, he said, went *wank, wank, wank*, until he was nearly driven mad. After that I saw him oftener, as I was a punctual, though useless, committee man at the A.B. . . .

'Reading through the foregoing has reminded me of once when I came in at Merton, and found him at work on a large drawing for a woven stuff, that conversation led to my remarking that I didn't know when he found time to write Epic poems, on which he said, "Oh, of course I make them while I'm doing this sort of work. A chap ought to be able to make an Epic and do this sort of work at the same time—of course!" I don't think he was altogether joking, but meant that he found the ornamental designing come easy.

'I've another little scrap of his writing that is pre-Mertonian. It's an acrostic on a post card, and belongs to the political period of 1879, and the meeting at St. James's Hall.'

At that date Morris had been swept into politics by his burning indignation against an epidemic of revolting barbarism. The

collapse of the Turkish Government in its European provinces during the year 1876 had been accompanied by massacres and torture on a hideous scale in Bulgaria, and the news of this in England although at first treated with apathy, gradually, as the facts became more fully realized, roused an overwhelming storm of protest and horror. Into all work connected with the Eastern Question Morris flung himself heart and soul, and his first plunge into the political arena was succeeded by a vigorous political campaign as treasurer of the National Liberal League. De Morgan writes to Mackail :—

'The anti-Turk Crusade, and the St. James's Hall meetings having landed Morris in politics (leastways I never heard anything of his politicalizing before then), an atmosphere of politics rankled in previously peaceful quarters, and all our souls were rent with a powerful hatred of Tories—Tories were our *bêtes noires* in them days, and in 1880 we rushed to the poll. My own feelings took the form of Acrostics, and sim'lar—I rather think your daughter Angela's grandpa has one which expresses my faith that by electing Sir Charles Dilke for Chelsea the millennium will come all the quicker. He keeps it among his testimonials to Baronets, to gratify his class prejudices—I have one from him on the word Dilke, of which the fourth line is—'Kum to grub at seven-thirty,' and I have one (which is what I am driving at) from Morris as follows :—

ELECTION DAY, 1880.

'How sweet the never-failing Spring comes round,
Up comes the sun we thought the sea had drown'd
Rending the clouds that darkened England's heart,
Right tears the veil of stealthy Wrong apart,
And we, long-worn, long faithful, glad of face,
Hoist the torn banner to its ancient place . . .

That's the first part—Hurrah—I will do the rest if I can—Gladstone for Middlesex!'

'This is written on a post card. He never did the rest. I recollect going to some other political meeting where some capital verses he had written for the purpose were sung by an audience chiefly of working men. The rendering was not equal to the verses.'

During this General Election in 1880, when Sir Charles Dilke and the historian Firth were standing for the same constituency, Burne-Jones, Morris and De Morgan bombarded each other with post cards representing electioneering propaganda, many of these taking the form of acrostics and one from Philip Burne-Jones being ingeniously planned so that the commencement of the lines spells *Dilke*, and their conclusion *Firth*. To this De Morgan replied, also on a post card :—

'Never vote for Inverarie
Out upon him—he's a Tory;
Similar, don't vote for Brown
He's an adjective and noun!
But would you flood the land with milk
And honey, back the Bart.—" Sir Dilke "?
Likewise, although he's got no Sir, th
E candidate whose name is FIRTH.

Having thus released Literature from the absurd shackles into which she appeared to be drifting, I remain Liberally your aff. D.M.

In another mood of irresponsible nonsense De Morgan wrote a communication in prose to Burne-Jones on three post cards, all posted the same day, and of which the sequence is indicated by the number of E's employed in the initial which represents Burne-Jones's Christian name:—

1st post card.

E. BURNE-JONES, Esq.

Quoth Benjamin Disraeli—'Well!
It's no use looking glum!
Imperium has gone to Hell
And *Libertas* has come'
(but he looks very glum nevertheless—pulse 720,000, and no plumpers!)
Did you forge a very pretty acrostic on *Hurrah*, and try to pass it off on me as though it were by W—ll—m.

2nd post card.

E. E. BURNE-JONES, Esq.

M—rr—s of Emperor's Square, Bloomsbury? It's very well done if you did. Now I'll tell you an election story. I went into a Pub: and addressed the owner—'Sir,' I said, 'I hear that Firth is in as well as Dilke—*Io paean!*' This I spake in the exuberance of my spirits. But the Publican replied—'Ah! and *I* 'ope 'e aint! *That's* where you and I differ.'

3rd post card.

E. E. E. BURNE-JONES, Esq.

But I am aware that I am becoming prolix—
Your aff. D.M.

Comink to-morrow evg.

The result of the Election was a triumph for the Gladstone Government, and the shower of post cards between the friends ceased with one of mock-sympathy from Burne-Jones urging De Morgan to inquire after 'poor Beaconsfield—could you go round and ask how he is this morning—they say he has passed a very bad night and I *am* anxious!'

'I, of course,' relates De Morgan, 'followed Morris's lead enthusiastically, and had he gone that way, should have attended Tory meetings to denounce Liberalism. But I was rather disconcerted when I found that an honest objection to Bulgarian atrocities had been held to be one and the same thing as sympathy with Karl Marx,[1] and that Morris took it for granted that I should be ready for enrolment with Hyndman and Co.!—I wasn't, and I remember telling him so, when he remarked that I wasn't a Radical. I said I *was*, according to my definition of the word. He said mine was wrong, and that the proper definition of the word "Radical" was a person opposed to the existing order of things. I said, very well then, I *wasn't* a Radical, and so we had it, up and down.

'I wish I could remember all the battles we had over politics. We always ended in a laugh. He said he knew I was a Tory at heart, and gave me a pinch of snuff—Naturally, he did not take me seriously. I have a dim recollection of a discussion on Socialism which ended in a scheme for the complete Reconstruction of Society *exactly as it is now*—so as to meet the views of both Revolutionaries and Conservatives. However, this was in the earlier days of Socialism—as he got more engrossed in the subject this sort of chat became less and less possible, and for many years I don't recollect politics being broached when I was at his home. I didn't take pains to go there when I knew there were certain Socialists about, as I never found (being at heart a bigot, don't you see?) that their personal charms were sufficient to make up for their holding opinions diametrically opposed to my own on every possible subject. Given this last condition to be unavoidable, in one's associates, I prefer Primrose Dames to Socialists.'

The energetic socialistic propaganda of Morris and his vehement denunciation of everything bourgeois, were a fruitful source of jest on the part of his friends; and the following fragment was sent by De Morgan to Burne-Jones:—

[1] The founder of international socialism, 1818–1864.]

'WILLIAM DE MORGAN,
36 Great Cheyne Row, Chelsea, S.W.
And Stone Cottage Pottery,
Merton Abbey.

'What a beautiful poem *Orator Prig* is—it isn't half appreciated!"

'I asked of my Socialist, Orator Jaw
What's your first observation? He answered "*bourgeois.*"

'And what is your second? He responded "O Law
It's identical, similar, likewise *bourgeois.*"

'And what is your third? He replied "To be sure
It's as follows, to wit, videlicet, *bourgeois*!"

'And what is your fourth? He proceeded to pour
Over tomes of statistics, then answered "*bourgeois*!"

'And what is your fifth? He considered some more
And paused for refreshments, then answered "*bourgeois*!"

'And what is your sixth? "As I mentioned before
It is," he replied, "(to speak briefly)—*bourgeois.*"

'And what is your seventh? He said "Lest you draw
Wrong conclusions from silence, I'll say it's *bourgeois.*"

'And what is your eighth?—"A surprise is in store
For you now! Do not start if I say it's *bourgeois*!"
8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8[1]
'*Go on, and do a little more—I'm tired.*'

Profoundly as De Morgan appreciated the genius and the greatness of Morris, it seems possible that he and his friends at this date did not enter into the true inwardness of 'Top's Socialism'—the large, tender heart of the man which made the recognition of preventable suffering a sheer agony to him, and drove him—with the bruised soul of a poet and the yearnings of an idealist—to confront, and court, all that was antagonistic to his own temperament—the sordid things of life, the ugly, and the terrible. De Morgan more aptly summed up the spirit of this crusade in later years. 'Top chose to call his *religion* "Socialism"'; but for himself, when asked if he were a socialist, De Morgan replied:—'First tell me what *is* a socialist, and then I can tell you if I am one.' In like manner, in regard to the various riddles of this life and the next which he reviewed in a spirit of investigation, his attitude was invariably that of the man who—to use his own metaphor—walks all round the pyramid and eyes it from different angles—laughing, meanwhile, in the Sunshine and

[1] The figure 8 is drawn in various attitudes which convey an impression of extreme exhaustion.

not dwelling with too great insistence on the spaces of Shadow, since he understands that all may be seen, one day, in far other perspective from the apex. It was De Morgan's rôle to weigh and balance inferences, not to dictate conclusions; and it is to be remarked, when considering the many problems on which he loved to dwell, how rarely he was ever betrayed into a definite or dogmatic pronouncement on any one.

In 1871 Morris had purchased beautiful old Kelmscott Manor, on the borders of Oxfordshire, a house which seemed to breathe a mingled atmosphere of poetry and romance, with its grey gables and mullioned windows, its old-world garden of yew hedges, roses and lavender, and its environment of emerald river-side meadows where one could fancy Lancelot cantering past, watched by the mystic Lady of Shalott. There, annually, De Morgan visited him, snatching a brief respite from the toil and stress of London, through golden summer days of idleness and rest. 'The height of expectant enjoyment was reached,' relates Miss Morris, 'when my father wrote to say I am coming on such a day, and bringing De Morgan with me. . . . Our friend on a holiday was full of quips and drolleries and ingenious riddles, all told in that thin high drawl, with a sort of vibration in it that was nearly but not quite a laugh, and that indicated enjoyment of his company and of his own conceit. It was good to listen to. Some of his jokes took the form of doggerel verse, some were swift sketches, expressive and prettily drawn. In those days he could scarcely write a letter without clothing what he had to say in some form of oddity.'

Among the few surviving relics of those dead summers is the following addressed by De Morgan to Morris:—

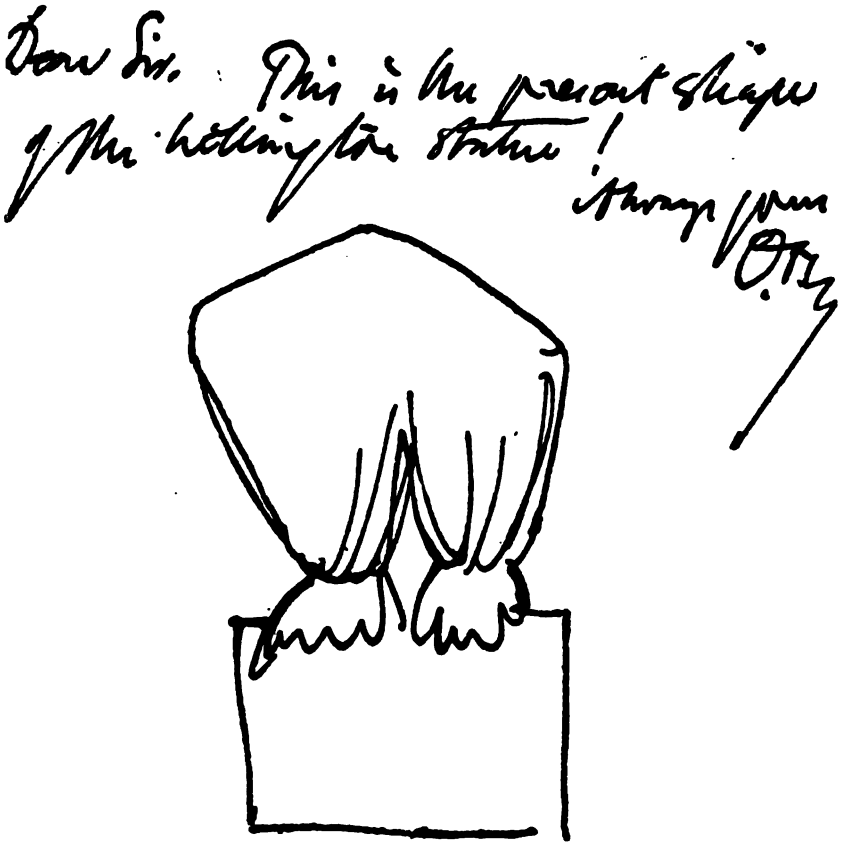
SELF-RESTRAINT

When the Gnat at eventide
  Rises from the marshy sedge,
Then the Poet, pensive-eyed,
  Lingers by the streamlet's edge.

Overhead the fluttering Bat
  Circles, while the convent-bells
Call to vespers; then the Gnat
  Bites the Poet, and it swells.

Then in sympathetic mood
  Whispers thus the opening rose:—
'Nothing does it any good—
  Wait with patience till it goes.'

Readers likely to be bit,
  Mark the moral of my verse!
If the Poet scratches it,
  He is sure to make it worse.



Seven years after the purchase of the old Manor House, Morris told De Morgan that he had found a house which he was going to buy in London and they went together to look at it. It was called 'The Retreat,' a good solid Georgian building, situated in the Upper Mall, Hammersmith, with only a narrow roadway bordered by elms between it and the Thames. It had recently been vacated by Dr. George Macdonald, the author, and when De Morgan first saw it, the decoration of the principal rooms consisted of red flock paper covered by long book-cases, painted black, and a ceiling of azure blue, dotted with gilt stars, considerably tarnished. Needless to say, Morris soon changed its appearance; and the name, which he said reminded him of a private asylum, he altered to Kelmscott House, after his other home on the banks of the river.

'The hundred and thirty miles of stream between the two houses were a real, as well as an imaginative, link between them,' relates Mr. Mackail. 'He liked to think that the water which

ran under his windows at Hammersmith had passed the meadows and grey gables of Kelmscott; and more than once a party of summer voyagers went from one house to the other by water, embarking at their own door in London and disembarking in their own meadow at Kelmscott.'

A Log, hitherto unpublished, exists of the first of these memorable journeys undertaken in the Ark, a little houseboat, which Morris describes as 'odd and delightful'; and in which, besides the host, his wife and two daughters, the crew consisted of 'Crom' Price, the Hon. Richard C. Grosvenor and 'Me—organ,' as little Margaret Burne-Jones had named De Morgan. The summary of their daily doings therein recorded is interspersed by individual comments thereon, inserted in the margin.

They started from Hammersmith at 3 p.m. on August 10, 1880, and were rowed to Kew by two men supplied by Biffen, the owner of the Ark. ('*Biffen's men*,' comments William Morris, '*one a boy, the other a bad case of chronic alcoholic poisoning, his eyes were gogglesome, probably because of grog.*') At Kew they were made fast to a barge and 'towed by a mercantile tin kettle' as far as Twickenham; later a man and pony from Oxford towed them from the bank. At Molesey Lock, reached by twilight, William Morris 'made an effort to light the party by means of a candle-lamp with a spring in it,' but unluckily the spring slipped, and the candle shot like a rocket into the lock, whereupon the vehemence of Morris's expletives 'gave undisguised delight to various parties in pleasure boats ranged along the side of the lock.' On the next occasion when Morris gave vent to a D—— 'big enough to be recorded,' there is a comprehensive note by the log-keeper: '*This narrative may, and should be, filled up at frequent intervals with such expletives as may seem to fit the occasion without fear of corrupting the text, or in any way leaning towards exaggeration of the facts.*' (*Further Note by W. M., 'Well! well! well!'*)

They reached Sunbury at 10.15 p.m. ('Curious and rather pleasant,' notes William Morris, 'muddling one's way across to the Inn in the dark!)—where, on arrival,—

'W.M. exclaimed, "What a stink!" The waiter replied, "It is nothing, sir, I assure you." R. C. G. inquisitively, "Is it a sewer?" Waiter in answer, "Yes, sir, quite sure." (Note by R. C. G.: After this unfortunate *jeu d'esprit* some of the males of the party seemed to think that they were entitled to indulge in the most abominable puns for the whole of the rest of the journey.) Note by our Communist: "*A mountain before a plain; a plain before a suburb; a suburb before a dust-heap; a dust-heap before a sewer; but a sewer before a gentleman's house.*"'

Entries follow of days in the open air, when De Morgan dragged the male members of the party out of bed 'miserable but helpless' for a bathe in the early dawn; of the catching of

Bowl painted in lustre on a dark blue ground with five fishes inside and three outside.
Height, 3¾. Diameter, 7¼ inches.
WILLIAM DE MORGAN FECIT
At the Victoria and Albert Museum.

fish by R.C.G., *'later incorporated into the system of the fisher'*; of food prepared by Morris—his culinary genius is a matter of history—meals which 'filled the company with satisfaction and excellent provisions': of 'Price appointed boteler by acclamation (his own),' and how he later regaled the company 'with an entertainment gratis with an umbrella, a shawl and a champagne bottle'; of teas partaken on the bank in a golden sunset; of the aurora borealis seen once in great beauty over the shimmering river; of nights spent by some of the party on board the Ark, by others at a river-side inn, concerning which occurs on one occasion the pathetic but reticent note by R. C. G., '*Domestic Insects.*' Of one evening when, to the dismay of the merry Bohemian crew, they suddenly found themselves and their queer craft in the middle of a fashionable regatta at Henley, where they created no small stir. 'The Ark was sculled majestically by De Morgan through a crowd of inferior craft and passed under the bridge not without dignity, amidst considerable excitement. . . . Hove to above the bridge, party still rather flustered owing to passing through the regatta.' And there were other graphic entries:—

'Towed on safely to Hambledon Lock. Great indignation of Lock Keeper Mrs. Lomax (a widow with a growing family) because the party refused to pay 1*s.* 6*d.* for the Ark and 3*d.* for the Albert; tearing up of receipt for 3*d.* by Mrs. Lomax; emphatic denunciation by W. M. of Thames Conservancy; offer by Price to undertake paternal relation towards the Lomax children. . . .

'Miss Macleod took a baby on board the Ark; Price offered to adopt it and was for feeding it on the spot with honey out of a spoon.

'Towed on to Wargrave, here the Ark ran aground on a mud bank; all the males of the party gave conflicting orders in loud tones; eventually De Morgan [characteristically] restored order and happiness by taking off his boots and socks, stepping into the mud and pushing her off. . . .

'Towed on to Caversham, W. M. and D. M. discussing the inequalities and injustice of our Social System with vigour, emphasis and eagerness; but suggesting different solutions. . . .

'Passed Streatley . . . also two gents bathing in the rushes on the towing-path side of the river. (*A note by the ladies—discovery of Moses by a lady among the rushes on a former occasion.*) . . .

'At Wallingford Took up quarters at the Town Arms Hotel kept by one Thirza Ransom; place smelt horrible. . . .

'Indifferent supper; smell still rampant; W. M. partook of five lemon squashes.

'Sunday, August 15. Abominable extortion in the charges of Thirza Ransom. Indignation (suppressed) of W. M., Mrs. M. and R. C. G. Start effected at 9.30. Warned all people on both banks of the river to avoid the Town Arms Hotel.

'Towed on to Clifton Lock and stopped for dinner just above it. W. M. (though angry) was appointed cook with excellent results as on two former occasions.

'During dinner D. M. recounted the story of his having partaken of mangy roast dog at Southampton at an hotel kept by a lady whose Christian name was also Thirza. (*Note by a lady during dinner "potted grouse is made of black beetles."*)

'Towed up to Culham Lock. (*Note by the Lock Keeper "I do not keep the Lock, the Lock keeps me."*)

'At this spot a number of children appeared and whined a melancholy and persistent ditty, "Please, sir, throw us a copper." (*Note by the smallest infant, "Crow us a thropper."*) D. M. and Miss May injured their own moral sense and that of the children by doing so.

'Towed on to Abingdon . . . on the towing-path an infant saved his own life by nearly tumbling into the water and R. C. G. saved the lives of the whole party by jumping on to the top of the Ark under the bridge and pushing her uphill through it. (*Note by R. C. G. This was one of many instances in which life was saved in various ways and by different people throughout the expedition.*)'

After Oxford again comes a note:—

'During this and the preceding day the whole party were frequently caused to groan in spirit by a succession of puns so outrageous that no words could describe them and no intelligent individual do ought else but shudder at the recollection of their number and nature. . . .'

And so the Log runs on, with its significant entries of '*great hilarity*,' while the holiday spirit of that vanished summer—the happy mood which in every triviality saw fresh food for merriment—still lives in its pages, though of those who then made merry, alas! all but one have 'gone to the Land of no laughter.'

'I have treasured mental pictures of this journey,' relates Miss Morris, 'with De Morgan in the foreground, always genial and content, whether called upon to scull our uncouth boat with its happy ragamuffin crew through the crowd of a genteel regatta, or to celebrate the voyage in verse and picture.' But to little Margaret Burne-Jones De Morgan penned an account of his adventures as follows:—

William De Morgan to Margaret Burne-Jones.

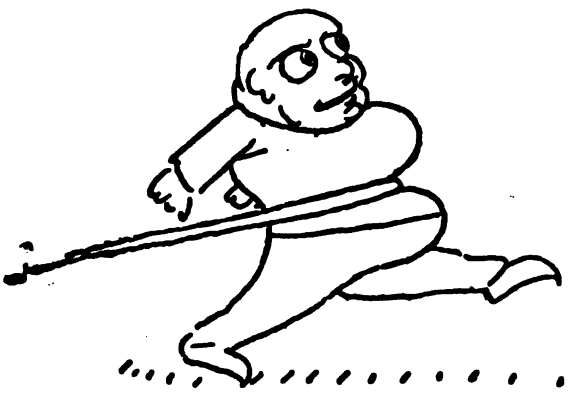
'KELMSCOTT,
'*August* 16—'80.
'No! *August* 17—'80.

'MY DEAR LITTLE MARGOT,—

'As to writing an account of our most eventful voyage—how can I? It would take all the columns of a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*. Besides I can't remember one thing from another——

'Very generally speaking, I did not exert myself at all to do anything, but I exerted everybody else very much indeed. I lay in the boat engaged in the manufacture of puns and bad jokes, and every one else rowed and steered and pushed and slapped and pinched the boats to make them go.

'Our boat had one sail (which we didn't use) and the helmsman never looked particularly pale, at least till the end of the voyage, when several characters, strange to say, were unwell, this was because they towed the



boats and got squeezed — I can tell you when a chap tries to tow, he gets exactly like curried fowls in tins, inside, owing to the compression.

'We set sail from Hammersmith as 'twer on Tuesday and arrived here so to speak on Monday. We slept at Sunbury on Tuesday, and were waked by a cock-a-doodle, but wouldn't say *doo*!

'There were once seven towns built by the inhabitants of Sunbury—it was the first thing built—Monbury and Tuesbury are extinct—Wednesbury still exists—Thursbury not—Fribury is in Switzerland where natives call it Fribourg-en-Swisse, but that is because they are foreigners and cannot help it—Saturbury was never finished owing to the half-holiday.

'Our next Station was Windsor, where the Castle is too large to move, but large enough to take the Queen for all that, and any number of Bishops and Knights into the bargain.

'I looked for Newton,[1] but I couldn't see him——

'Eton is a pretty place, it is called so after the fish which are eaten there——

'Then we came to Great Marlowe, which reminded us of little Margot.

'We stayed at the Complete Angler. It is called so after an Angle of 360° in the immediate neighbourhood. We saw the Obtuse Angler staying there.

'Then came Sonning—a very pretty crib—it is so called from the French *sonner*, to ring a bell, because we rang the bell so often for things.

'The next place was Wallingford, *scilicet* Wailingfold, because the bill was very high and we lamented—and a very silly set [2] we were not to ask beforehand what inn to go to——

'The next was Oxford, when in spite of Mr. Morris's dreadful revolutionary sentiments we slept in the King's Arms. There are many derivations of Oxford, and it probably comes from all of them, though every one has his favourite.

'*Auksford* from the Auks—they are not there but in the Orkneys—that doesn't matter—if they like to give their name—let them—that's their look out.

'*Arxford*—from the inquiring spirit of the Dons.

'*Arksford*—because a narrer mind only wants a narrer 'at [an Ararat].

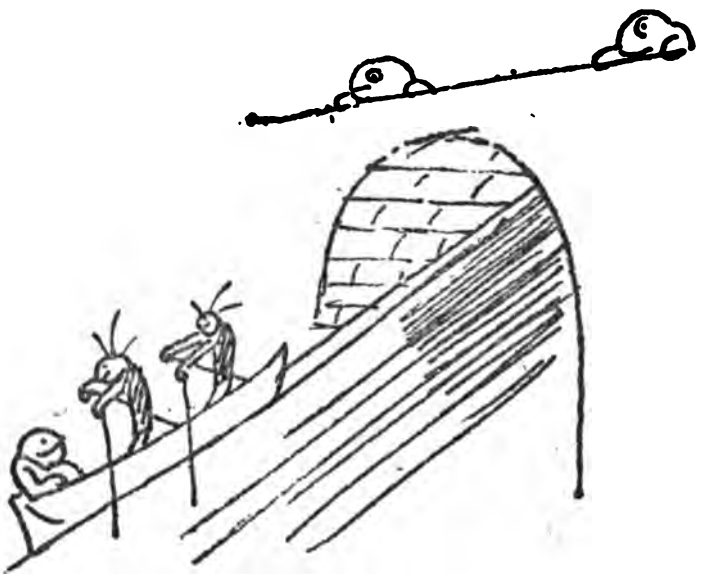
They are ashamed of this and always wear broad ones. Also Boxford and Coxford because they cannot easily take in more than one idea at a time—[erasures] that's enough!

'Then we came on here yesterday. We were towed by Mr. Bossom (who continually unbossomed himself from the bank into Mr. Morris's

[1] A reference to the firm of Winsor & Newton, colour merchants.

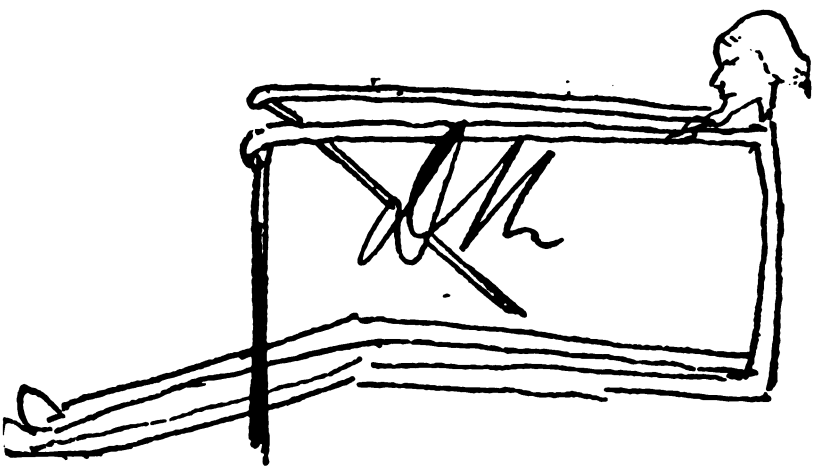
[2] *Gratis.* [Note by De Morgan.]

sympathetic ear until the latter murmured against him) as far as Bablock-hithe, or Badbloke-hithe, so called from Wm. Morris and your Uncle Crommy Price. We got through lots of weirs, and unhappily I passed without noticing it (so as to mention it) Weir 7, on which Wordsworth wrote that pretty poem. We nearly got drowned getting through Radcote Bridge—some strong language was used, but I name no names. It is very difficult going uphill through Bridges.



'However, we are all safe and sound after many perils past. We didn't finish the ham and we have still got 12 pounds of the cheese—four bottles of the champagne arrived safe—the remainder was gone, and we cannot account for it.

'With all their loves accept mine from your loving uncle.'



Nearly twenty years later De Morgan was asked by 'little Margot's' husband, Mr. Mackail, to fill in certain gaps in the picture of that merry voyage, and looking back through the haze of memory to those far-away summer days, he related how 'among the things that come out most prominent in my recollection' was one evening when 'at the Hotel where we put up,' there occurred a battle royal respecting Charles Dickens's creation, Mrs. Harris, as to whether she was, or was not, an *abstraction*.

'It began like this: We played Twenty Questions, and Mrs. H. was the subject to be guessed—I think by me, as I was sent out of the room while the discussion proceeded how my first question—"abstract or concrete?" should be answered. I remember being outside the door when the waiter came up from the people in the room underneath to know if anything was the matter. It was a warm discussion, but the furniture was strong, and there was nothing in the bill for breakages. It was virtually between Charles Faulkner, whom we had picked up at Oxford—and he maintained that Mrs. Harris was just as much a concrete idea as any other character in fiction. Morris repudiated this indignantly almost, affirming that she wasn't even a character in fiction, as she doesn't occur in the story, except as an invention of Mrs. Gamp, who is herself a character in fiction. There is certainly no conclusive evidence that Mrs. Gamp had any definite image or idea of Mrs. Harris in her mind—and that she wasn't merely a LIE, pure and simple, in which case perhaps she couldn't be regarded as concrete. It's a delicate question. I recollect discussing it afterwards with M. in the Merton Abbey days when I was putting down the foundation of my unfortunate building there. It was recalled to our mind by the *concrete*—naturally.

'The foregoing about Mrs. Harris gives a fair idea of what the voyages up the river were like—according to my recollection we none of us stopped laughing all the way. The second voyage must have been just about when Merton Abbey was started, as I remember, at Sandford, near Oxford, there was a chimney falling down and some remarks were made about Sandford and Merton—this fixes it in my mind.'

For out of that happy comradeship—those eager days of work, those golden days of laughter—had grown a project between William Morris and De Morgan to combine the site of their separate undertakings and to settle their factories either on the same premises or near together. Orange House had, in its turn, become too cramped in space for De Morgan; and Morris was anxious to concentrate his own various enterprises under one roof. But the project dragged on as a pleasing possibility for some time before it materialized. Miss Morris relates:—

'The country easily accessible from London was explored a

long time in vain; then one summer holiday a disused silk-mill with most of the necessary qualifications was discovered in a remote village, one of those jewel-like clusters of grey buildings that nestle among the slopes of the Cotswolds. All the points in favour of this site (so far removed from the "great wen") were seriously and eagerly considered, those against it being set aside for future consideration. However, this dream of reviving the crafts in a part of the country where they had formerly flourished had to be regretfully abandoned by the two friends, and the laughing waters of that wide free country to be exchanged for the sleepy Wandle and the melancholy of the once-country struggling against conversion into town. I think that discovery of the ideal factory must have been in 1880, the year that the two families made a memorable journey to London from Kelmscott by water in the Ark.'

De Morgan himself relates: 'My own settlement at Merton came about in this wise. Morris and I were always talking over an imaginary factory which I was to occupy jointly with him. It wasn't so much that we believed in it—indeed, we always called it the FICTIONARY—as that it gave us an endless excuse for going over premises. We raised the hopes of many a proprietor of unsaleable property, always going carefully into the minutest details and arranging the rooms, which was to have which, and so forth, till the miserable owner really believed a deal was sure to eventuate. We brought away bottles of water for analysis to make sure that it was fit to dye with. I recollect Morris's delight when a certificate was sent from an eminent analyst to the effect that a sample taken from pipes supplying all Lambeth was totally unfit for consumption—and could only result in prompt zymotic disease! "There's your science for you, De M.!" said Morris. I explained that, if the analyst had known that 250,000 people drank the water daily, he would have analysed it different. This was in Battersea, and never came to anything.

'I think Blockley was nearest to fructifying of any of the places we saw. Blockley is a village in Gloucestershire, or Oxford or Worcester, I can't say which, all those counties having split up into fragments in that corner, and become as it were sprays of map-chips. We drove there somehow, from Fairford maybe, and found it an old village of many water-mills, which once turned out endless silk yarn for Coventry. The mills were all empty and decaying, and we might have bought them for very little. Morris was very much in love with the place. It is true he did not want water-power to the extent of 200 h.p., but then the place was so delightful, and there were such a lot of people out of work there. The last notice of wage-reduction was on the doors of the workshops, sevenpence a day, I think,

Dish, saucer-shaped, painted in colours with a peacock against a flowering tree. Diameter 16 inches

[*At the Victoria & Albert Museum, London*

the last gasp before the trade succumbed, which it finally did when the silk-worm disease impaired the silk and made it unworkable in their (or these) machines.

'The expectations of the unhappy owners were worked up by our inspections (I know we went twice), but common sense and Wandle over-ruled Morris, and Blockley vanished.'

In the spring of 1881, Morris wrote to De Morgan:—

'KELMSCOTT HOUSE,
'HAMMERSMITH,
'*Saturday.*

'DEAR DE M.,—

'I wish you would come over to-morrow. The fictionary sounds likely to become a factory: Welsh [the out-going tenant at Merton] has practically accepted our offer. Also we have practically settled matters with the lawyers and the owners: so adieu Blockley and joy for ever, and welcome grubbiness, London, low spirits and boundless riches.

'Your affec.,
'W. MORRIS.'

Only one more attempt at exploration did the friends subsequently make, cycling together to inspect an unsuitable place at Southwark—'Our last expedition,' wrote Morris regretfully on April 28, 'till Merton Abbey gets too small for us!'

Thus the joint search which Morris and De Morgan had so long prosecuted came to an end, and the 'Fictionary' materialized in the summer of 1881. The premises at Merton Abbey, which covered seven acres of ground, were disused print-works on the high road from London to Epsom, just seven miles from Charing Cross, and, although old-fashioned, were in a good state of repair. They had originally been part of a silk-weaving factory started by Huguenot refugees, and it seemed fitting that the descendant of a Huguenot refugee should utilize them. Through them ran the river Wandle supplying the clear water which was essential to the scheme; while a hint of romance still clung to the locality where, beyond the meadow, the remains of a mediæval wall marked the site of the former Abbey and constituted the sole relic of Nelson's 'dear, dear, Merton' which had been pulled down many years before.

'When Mr. De Morgan was clearing out to go to Merton,' relates Mr. Bale, 'it was a strange sight. He was always slapdash in those days, and he couldn't stand the bother of packing. He just sat on a chair and put a hammer through dishes worth £2 10s. and £3, at the same time saying, "Go on, boys, help yourselves!"—which you may be quite sure we did.

'When he pulled the kiln down to go to Merton, bothered if he didn't give all his bricks (especially his fire-bricks) to the Borough of Chelsea and actually paid the cartage! when he must have known he would want them badly at Merton. As it was

he had fine material for breaking up to mix with his fire clay in making his tiles and vases.

'When I arrived at Merton, I found he had built his kiln *in* and *on* the ground, right in the centre of the building—the chimney shaft quite a splendid idea, but unfortunately it was built over the centre of the kiln, and the weight of the shaft was enormous, two fire-bricks thick. I saw that it was nice and comfortable to start with, but that I shouldn't like to be there when the kiln was beginning to wear out, for if it fell it would take the whole of the building with it.'

De Morgan's own account of his proceedings in this new venture were as follows: 'In 1881–2 I took a piece of land at Merton Abbey and erected buildings and kilns there. . . . I first constructed a magnificent basement, and then decided it was too handsome to put to the base purposes meant for a mere basement, so I built another storey and that was, in a sense, the same story, for unfortunately it proved too magnificent for what I intended; so I had to build another one, and so on till the building became a sky-scraper, and then it wasn't suitable for anything I wanted, and I had to move, and that was the end of that story!'

One serious objection to Merton, however, of which he soon became aware, was its inaccessibility from London, and the daily journey there grew yet more irksome as his health gave cause for anxiety. He was already suffering from a weakness of the spine which troubled him for the remainder of his days, and was then believed to be the result of a tendency towards phthisis; moreover, in 1884, the need for exercising special precaution against this constitutional delicacy was brought home to him cruelly by the death of his sister Annie, Mrs. Thompson. The letter which Morris wrote to him from London on this occasion still survives:—

'KELMSCOTT HOUSE,
'*January* 19, 1884.

'MY DEAR BILL,—

'Of course from what you said to me I have been expecting your sad news any day. What is there to say about it save that it is a sad tale? However, life is good as long as we can really live, and even sorrow if so taken has something good in it as a part of life, as I myself have found at times—yet have not the less bemoaned myself all the same.

'So in spite of yourself I wish you a long life, my dear fellow, to play your due part in.

'Give my love and sympathy to your mother and Mary—I shall hope to see you soon again.

'Yours affectionately,
'WILLIAM MORRIS.'

At this date it did not look as though the 'long life' which his friend wished him would ever be De Morgan's portion. Yet

his enthusiasm counteracted physical weakness, and he struggled on with apparently unabated energy. Meanwhile he retained the show-room in Chelsea till 1886, when he took premises at 45 Great Marlborough Street, formerly the house of Mrs. Siddons, for the exhibition of his pottery in what had once been a large ball-room on the ground floor.

'About a year later,' he relates, 'owing to circumstances connected with health, I was obliged to limit my supervision of my factory at Merton. The long journey every day was more than I could manage and I was unable to make my domestic arrangements fit in with the plan I always had of residing there. Practically I had to choose between giving up the business and bringing the factory nearer home.' None the less, it is said that one consideration alone clinched his wavering decision to leave Merton. He was at this date absorbed in the designing and decoration of a pot of abnormal size which subsequently became the property of Lord Ashburnham. This *chef d'œuvre* would not go into the great kiln at Merton; and where his art was concerned, no consideration, monetary or otherwise, was ever allowed to stay action. The erection of a new and larger kiln was immediately decided upon; Merton Abbey had become too small for him; and he abruptly brought to a close what may be termed the second epoch in his manufacture of pottery.

A rumour gained credence that he was giving up his work, and he wrote as follows to the wife of his old friend Henry Holiday:—

William De Morgan to Mrs. Holiday.

'*December* 16, '87.

'If F. told you I was going to give up making lustres, it must be that he has been giving ear to a rumour to that effect which I believe is frequently put about by some disinterested admirers of mine.

'I call them disinterested because they don't take any interest in the circulation of my goods, and I suppose they are admirers or they wouldn't copy my goods so closely, faults and all!

'The funny part of it is that we can none of us make a really good piece of lustre ware to save our lives.

'Cantagalli of Florence makes good lustre, and Clement Massier, a Frenchy Mossoo, has done some rather interesting ones lately.

'However, to resume, I am *not* giving up lustre making. On the contrary, I am hoping to turn out some really creditable work very soon at the pottery at Sands End, when I have removed from Merton Abbey, to be within reach of home. . . . I have been awfully busy and gone nowhere.'

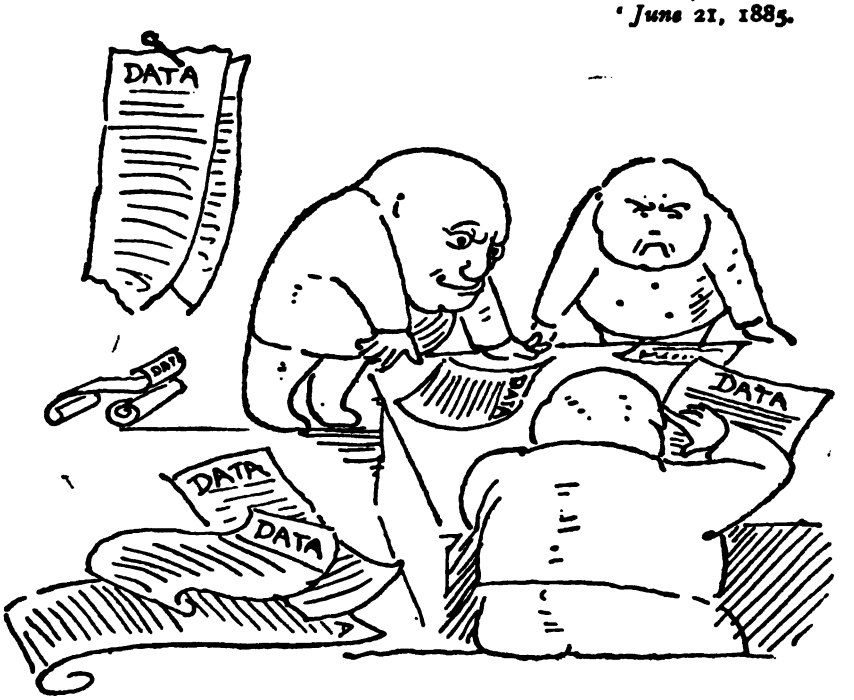
It was in 1888 that De Morgan started work in De Morgan Road, Sands End, Fulham, entering into partnership with Halsey Ricardo. 'I am glad you are not a sleeping-partner,' he wrote encouragingly to the latter; 'My idea of a sleeping-partner is a partner who just wakes up to share the profits and

then goes to sleep again!' But before the removal to Fulham actually came to pass another and yet greater change had taken place in De Morgan's life, which is thus referred to by Mr. Bale:—

'Mr. De Morgan was, as I have said, a very generous master. If any man was in trouble, his hand went to his pocket at once. One day a lad in his employ came to him with the news that he was going to get married. Mr. De Morgan at once said, "Then you'll want more money if you're going to keep a wife, so I'll raise your wages." After that, all the lads were for getting married and he had to treat them all the same. At last he could stand it no longer, and when a fresh one came to him with the same news, he said, "Now look here, boys, I can have no more of this. The next man in this factory who gets married will get the sack." But the laugh turned against him, for the next man to get married was Mr. De Morgan himself.'

William De Morgan to Edward Burne-Jones.

'CHELSEA,
'*June* 21, 1885.



'DEAR NED,—

'I meant to have come in yesterday evg.; but I was engaged to be married and couldn't!

'I wanted to convey the news to you of *two* engagements that have

just come to pass. One is my own—I am engaged to a lady. The other is Evelyn Pickering's—*She* is engaged to a cove, or bloke.

'Having supplied you with the data (see frontispiece) she and I are both strongly disposed to come round some time and see if you can guess whom we are respectively engaged to. Don't give it up!

'We send you all our united kind love, in which my mother and sister commingle.

'Yours affectly,
'D. M.'

Edward Burne-Jones to William De Morgan.

'My dear D. M.,—

'I am so glad, but you might have knocked me down with a crowbar, I was so surprised—regular took aback I were.

'Now that's pretty comfortable, I call it—we are just where we were and no complications between parties.

'We are all glad about it.

'Find a day next week for a feast and come both of you and we'll have larks.

'Yes, it is admirable—in former merrier years I should have called it capital, but the word terrifies me now and whenever I see it I slink away.

'My dear fellow, I feel as if *I* had suggested it!

'Always your affte,
'Ned.'

Pencil Sketch in a Note-Book by William De Morgan.

EVELYN
DE MORGAN

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF THE PICKERINGS

FOR a brief space we must turn from the life-story of William De Morgan to consider that of his wife, since for thirty years she was destined to be the most prominent factor in the moulding of his later career. But in order to measure the quality of her influence it is necessary first to understand something of her own temperament and its development, derived alike from her immediate ancestry and environment.

Mary Evelyn Pickering was the eldest daughter of Percival Andree Pickering, Q.C., Recorder of Pontefract, Attorney-General for the County Palatine and sometime Treasurer of the Inner Temple. He married in 1853 Anna Maria Spencer-Stanhope, who was herself the eldest daughter of John and Lady Elizabeth Spencer-Stanhope, of Cannon Hall, Yorkshire.

Of the intellectual qualifications of the Pickerings as a race it is possible to speak with an unusual degree of certainty from a remote period. 'I apprehend,' said Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King of Arms, writing to Evelyn's grandfather, 'that there is scarcely any family in England so well descended as yours, and who can so well authenticate it, not merely by the pedigree, but by the records of the kingdom, combining ancient nobility and royalty.' Nor, he might have added, were there many families the record of which—other than this cursory glance which is all that we can here devote to it—might prove so entertaining to posterity and full of lively incident.

We have seen how the De Morgans belonging to the earlier generations regarded life very seriously. They were willing to sacrifice all worldly advantage to their convictions—alike to orthodoxy or heterodoxy; and we have seen, too, how William, with his versatile genius and his happy Bohemianism, was, in much, the product of a collateral inheritance. The same may be said of his wife and her forbears. But while the Pickerings, as a race, regarded life with an equal gravity, this did not, in their case, engender any placid indifference to worldly advantage. Brilliant, comely and self-assertive through the generations, their constant prominence in the angry world of politics was,

it must be admitted, usually on the side of aggression—occasionally mis-named liberty; but neither did they despise the plums of existence.

Only one noted member of the family seems to have left behind him an entirely peaceful memory; Sir James Pickering,[1] one of the earliest recorded Speakers of the House of Commons, *circa* 1378, who placidly represented the Counties of Westmorland and Yorkshire as Knight of the Shire from 1362 to 1497. For the rest, where there was a turmoil in the State, the Pickerings figured in it, and sank or swam with the swaying of the tide. Their crest, a bear's paw with the claws somewhat in evidence, and the suggestive motto *Pax tua, requies mea* remained singularly well chosen.

Thus John Pickering, B.D., Prior of the Dominican House of Cambridge, helped to organize and was a leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, in consequence of which Henry VIII wrote that 'Dr. Pickering should be sent up to him,' and Dr. Pickering was duly executed at Tyburn in 1537. Another learned Dr. Pickering, a kinsman, at the same date and for the same cause, long languished in the Tower; while a few years later Sir William Pickering, Ambassador to France in 1551, celebrated as a courtier and diplomatist, narrowly escaped a similar fate by being concerned in Wyatt's conspiracy.

This Sir William, 'a Patron of the Arts,' however, whose fine tomb may be seen to-day in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, had a remarkable career, to which space will not now permit us to do justice. His father was Knight-Marshal to Henry VIII, and he early figured at Court, not always, according to history, in enviable fashion. For instance, in 1543, on the significant date of April 1, we are told that he and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, were brought before the Council charged with the heinous offence of 'eating flesh in Lent' and of 'walking about the streets of London at night breaking the windows of the houses with stones shot from cross-bows.' These misdeeds, which sound like the result of an inconvenient ebullition of youthful spirits, William at first denied, then confessed, and was forthwith imprisoned in the Tower. But later he acquitted himself with such credit as to erase the memory of that luckless 'All Fools' day, and after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, having amply proved his prowess both in the field and in the more subtle strife of the diplomatic world, he apparently designed to live quietly at his home, Pickering House, in the parish of St. Andrew Undershaft, London. Fate, however, was against his purpose, for we learn that, 'being a brave, wise and comely English gentleman,' he was seriously thought of as a suitor for Elizabeth's hand. The

[1] I am here following the pedigrees compiled by the late W. Vade Walpole and by Edward Rowland Pickering, which are obviously correct.

BOREAS AND THE DYING LEAVES.
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT.

capricious Queen indeed showed him such marked preference that the ambitious courtiers with whom she was surrounded became alarmed. In 1559 we are told that 'the Earl of Arundel . . . was said to have sold his lands, and was ready to flee out of the kingdom because he could not abide in England if the Queen should marry Mr. Pickering, for they were enemies.[1] Another chronicler with a note of venom relates that so imperious was the speech of Sir William, so overbearing his demeanour, and so lavish his expenditure on the rich dress with which he adorned his handsome person, that he thereby lent a handle to those who would fain have wrought his undoing. Nevertheless, although he excited much jealousy, he successfully avoided the pitfalls which beset his path owing to the too open admiration of the Queen, and eventually succeeded—no mean feat under the circumstances—in expiring peacefully with his comely head still intact on his shoulders and his neck unclasped by the hangman's rope. To Cecil he left his 'papers, antiquities, globes, compasses,' and his favourite horse.

By the sixteenth century, the Pickerings, who had previously been landowners in Westmorland and Yorkshire, were inhabiting the fine old Tudor mansion of Tichmarsh in Northamptonshire, now completely disappeared. There, in 1605, Sir Gilbert Pickering gained for himself great *kudos* for his activity in apprehending the conspirators of the Gunpowder Plot, although amongst them was his own brother-in-law, Robert Keyes, who, in consequence, suffered for such 'apish behaviour' by being executed in company with Guy Fawkes at Westminster. Sir Gilbert died in 1613; and in Cromwellian times his grandson, Sir Gilbert, Baronet of Nova Scotia, and a brother John, of Gray's Inn, were prominent Parliamentarians. The former, to whom his cousin John Dryden, the poet,[2] was secretary, sat in the Long Parliament, being also one of the Protector's Council, and of his House of Lords. He was moreover one of the Judges of Charles I, but he attended the trial only at the outset, and was not of those

[1] *Cal. State Papers for For. Ser.*, 1559.

[2] The connexion between the two Puritan families of Dryden and Pickering was a double one. Not only did a Dryden take to wife a Pickering, who became the mother of the poet, but a Pickering took to wife a Dryden. 'The home of John Dryden,' we are told, 'was at Tichmarsh, where his father, a younger son of the first baronet of Canons Ashby, had settled. Here he had married into the leading family of the place, the Pickerings, who resided at the great house. His wife was Mary, first cousin of Sir Gilbert, the head of the family, and daughter of Henry Pickering, rector of Aldwincle All Saints, and it was at her father's rectory that, in 1631, John, the eldest of her fourteen children, was born. An alliance between the Drydens and the Pickerings was the more natural in that both families were strongly Puritan, and took the side of the Parliament in the Civil War.'—*Highways and Byways in Northamptonshire*, by Herbert A. Evans, p. 71.

who signed the death warrant. Thus at the Restoration, although he was declared incapable of holding public office, he escaped more drastic punishment through the intervention of his brother-in-law, Edward Montague, Earl of Sandwich; indeed Pepys tells us how he received from Lady Pickering 'wrapped up in a paper, £5 in silver' to induce him to use his influence with her brother, 'my Lord, on behalf of her misguided husband.'

During the Civil War, John, the brother of this Sir Gilbert, had raised the 'Pickering regiment' for the Parliament among his Northamptonshire neighbours, and distinguished himself at Naseby and elsewhere. He is described as 'a little man, but of great courage'; nevertheless, he seems to have been wanting in tact and a fanatic of more pronounced type than his brother; for in 1645 he caused a mutiny in the regiment which he commanded by insisting on delivering to his troopers a rousing sermon at a moment when they were not in a suitable frame of mind to appreciate such an attention! Another brother, Edward, was a lawyer, and is described by Roger North as a 'subtle fellow, a money-hunter, a great trifler, and avaricious, but withal a great pretender to puritanism, frequenting the Rolls Chapel, and most busily writing the sermon in his hat that he might not be seen.' In brief, the Pickerings at that date, like others of their generation, seemed to have battened on a curious mixture of sermons and sanctity, of shrewdness and time-serving; and to have sought Heaven diligently with one eye still firmly fixed on their worldly advantage.

Nevertheless, save for the daughter of Sir Gilbert Pickering, the beautiful and talented Mistress Betty, afterwards wife to John Creed of Oundle, who was acclaimed as an amateur artist of considerable local fame, we find no trace through the passing of the centuries that the family at Tichmarsh distinguished themselves in the gentler arts of literature or painting; wherefore it is curious to reflect that from the Puritan Pickerings and the Huguenot De Morgans should have sprung two descendants both so unlike their ancestors in this respect as these whose life-story we are here reviewing.

Glancing on, therefore, swiftly down the generations, we come to Edward Lake Pickering, of the Exchequer, the great-grandfather of Evelyn De Morgan, who died in 1788. His wife Mary Umfreville, lived till 1836, when she expired in her 93rd year, a wonderful old lady who boasted, approved by Burke, that she was the last of the direct branch of the Umfrevilles, exhibiting a pedigree which begins with the Saxon Kings of England, and in which William the Conqueror figures as a less important unit over a century and a half later. This couple had two sons, who survived them, of whom the second was Edward

Rowland Pickering, of Lincoln's Inn. He married Mary Vere, one of the most beautiful women of her day; and to them were born eight sons and three daughters.

The portraits of Edward Rowland which are extant exhibit him as a man of middle age, shrewd and kindly of countenance, and stately of pose; though of necessity they fail to convey the quaint courtliness and old-world dignity with which he impressed all who came in contact with his attractive personality.

'I delight in him,' [wrote Lady Elizabeth Spencer-Stanhope enthusiastically, after meeting him for the first time at the date of her daughter's engagement to his son]. . . . 'He is exactly like the description of an old novel of Miss Burney's . . . an *unmistakable* high-born and high-bred gentleman, in a brown scratch-wig, all on end on his head, with an indescribable mixture of kind-heartedness, shrewdness and humour in his countenance, standing on his own foundation, and feeling that his son and his family are at least on a par with any nobleman in the land. . . . He is of the same class of original as Lord Stanhope and Lord Suffolk—a sort of quaint, clever creature. . . . His pert little daughter-elect cannot think of him without laughing, and he seemed inclined to laugh at himself!'

And later she writes yet more enthusiastically:—

'I cannot tell you how delightful Mr. Pickering *père* is, quite like what one reads about in books, but never meets in real life . . . how you would delight in him, with his great good-breeding and extreme quaintness. He is very clever and unusual in his integrity; I long for you to meet him, with his charming old-world manners and that brown scratch-wig standing straight upright from his head!'

As to his wife, 'my dearest partner' as he generally termed her, Lady Elizabeth, on first meeting her, pronounced her to be 'one of the most gentle, lovely, loving, and I should think *loveable* of human beings'—a description which aptly summed up the characteristics, and possibly the limitations, of the beautiful woman who won admiration from all whom she encountered. Throughout the passing years, Time never perceptibly printed a wrinkle on the smoothness of her exquisite skin, nor ruffled her placid outlook on a world where, for her, all combined to make the rough ways pleasant. Gentle, yielding, and charming from youth to age, generous without stint, and extravagant to a fault, she was likewise fastidious in many ways which, to a later generation would appear difficult of credence, but which nevertheless seemed a necessary complement to her own individuality. For one, she had a horror of what, to her, was literally 'filthy lucre' and refused ever to soil her hands by touching money which had been used before. Coins fresh from the bank were kept by her in little round boxes of horn or ivory, suited to their size, or dainty bags of wash-leather tied by coloured ribbon, and to these still cling the faint aroma of the attar of roses which once scented the pieces of shining gold or silver which they

guarded so carefully from any chance of vulgar contamination.

Edward Rowland worshipped his beautiful wife; they remained lovers to the end of their days; and as an old man, on the rare occasions when he was separated from her, he wrote to her letters which still breathe all the passionate devotion and tender reverence of romantic youth.

Of the many sons and daughters born to this couple, seven survived infancy; and of these Percival Andree, the father of Evelyn De Morgan, was the second.

An anecdote of his childhood has survived which at least bespeaks imagination and kindliness of heart. Percy, as he was called, had been receiving religious instruction from his mother, who had imparted to him the sad fate of Adam and Eve, summed up in that melancholy sentence 'Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.' The words sank into the child's mind and made an impression which his elders little suspected. Afterwards, seated at the window gazing out on to the chill March day, he was heard to be weeping bitterly. Kind arms enclosed him, and sympathetic inquiries were made respecting the cause of his woe. But the child wept on unrestrainedly; till at length, pointing to the street where the chill winds were blowing the dust in clouds past the house, he exclaimed tragically, 'Oh! *poor, poor* Adam and Eve!—how they are blowing about!' The Divine vengeance which had apparently condemned our first parents to drift helplessly—and *dirtily*—through the ages appalled his tender heart and left him so crushed with despair that for long he refused to be comforted.

In those days the custom still prevailed of concentrating all care and expenditure upon the education of the eldest son, while furnishing the younger members of the family only with the good solid instruction suitable to whatever profession they were destined to pursue. Edward Rowland did not follow this system. Each of the young Pickerings went to Eton, where several were distinguished both as scholars and cricketers, and then to the University. At Eton, Percy was known by the name of 'Mop-stick' on account of his curly hair, and his good looks were proverbial. He became a great friend of young William Ewart Gladstone, who for many years subsequently kept up a correspondence with him, in which he expressed himself enthusiastically Tory in principle; and only his change of politics, later in life, made a severance between the friends. At Cambridge, after going to Trinity College, Percy, like his elder brother, became a Fellow of St. John's By and by, at the Bar, he was noted for his eloquence, his penetration and his sense of humour.

He was past forty when the event occurred which was destined to alter all the remainder of his days. The story has already

been told in *The Letter-bag of Lady Elizabeth Spencer-Stanhope*; but so pretty a romance may be briefly recapitulated.

While on the Northern Circuit Mr. Pickering went to stay with his friend Mr. Milnes Gaskell at Thornes House, near Wakefield, who, one day, suggested that they should go over to Cannon Hall, a few miles off, to call upon Lady Elizabeth Spencer-Stanhope and her charming daughters. Arrived at their destination, however, they found the family had gone to attend a school-treat which was taking place that afternoon, so the two men walked down through the sunny park in search of the scene of festivity.

Now it happened that, a short time before, the village school-children had presented Anna Maria Stanhope, Lady Elizabeth's eldest daughter, with a little bonnet of white plaited straw which they had made for her, and thinking to please them she had decided to wear it on this occasion. The prim little headgear, shadowing her dark hair and brilliant eyes, proved singularly becoming, but her sisters had laughed at her for wearing it. 'You look a perfect Lucilla!' they declared, referring to Mrs. Hannah More's novel; 'All that is wanted is Cœlebs in search of a wife!'

And as though their words were prophetic, Cœlebs appeared in the person of the unknown visitor, and as instantly fell in love with the girl whom he saw thus for the first time enacting the rôle of Lucilla—suitably employed playing with the village children in the park, her pretty face framed in the simple bonnet of white plaited straw.

But the course of the romance did not at first run smoothly; and three or four years passed before, at his third proposal, his devotion found its reward. After their marriage the young couple lived first in Green Street, in a little house with a bay window, now pulled down, which during a former generation had sheltered another romance, for there had resided the beautiful Miss Farren who became Lady Derby. Later they removed to No. 6 Upper Grosvenor Street; and there their eldest daughter, Mary Evelyn, was born, while there also during the years which followed, two sons and then another daughter—the present writer—came into existence.

'There was no hope for Evelyn from the first!' her mother used to say laughingly, in view of an episode which occurred at the child's christening. A great-uncle, Mr. Charles Stanhope, officiated on that occasion, a venerable and charming person, who nevertheless was noted for many a malapropism which severely taxed the gravity of his congregation. At the period in the service when the sponsors are called upon to renounce all evil on behalf of the unconscious infant, Mr. Stanhope turned to them, and demanded in a stentorian voice—'Do you, in the name of this child, promise to *remember* the devil and all his

works?' The perplexed god-parents, faced with such an unexpected dilemma, and feeling it useless to argue the point, glanced helplessly at each other and responded fervently—'*We do!*'

In view, however, of the question of heredity, it may be well to glance at the heritage which the young mother brought to her children from her own forbears, and which, in the case of her eldest daughter, seems to have been a determining factor both in regard to temperament and career.

Mrs. Pickering, on her father's side, came of two families, the Spencers and the Stanhopes, who had been settled in Yorkshire since the Middle Ages—a race of fine old country Squires of a type now rapidly becoming extinct, men who, generation after generation, trod reputably, each in the footsteps of his predecessor, and proved themselves, as occasion dictated, shrewd magistrates, bold sportsmen, brave soldiers, stout topers, profound scholars or fine gentlemen. But they were apparently men of simple lives and of single aims, for the two houses which they inhabited show little trace of the inveterate dilettante or collector, nor of any keen lover of art having resided in them.

It is therefore when we turn to the family of Lady Elizabeth, the wife of John Stanhope, that it becomes evident whence came the artistic element which was to develop in both her child and grandchild.

The story of this lady's family has been told, at length, elsewhere;[1] for our present purpose it must suffice to say that she was a direct descendant of Thomas, Earl of Leicester, the great dilettante of the mid-eighteenth century, and coadjutor of another famous dilettante and architect, Lord Burlington. Thomas Coke. who on a barren part of the Norfolk coast erected a palace of Italian art and filled it with choice treasures of antiquity, was the possessor of a master-mind, and left the impress of genius on all with which he dealt. His nephew and successor, the father of Lady Elizabeth, better known as 'Coke of Norfolk,' although his best energies were concentrated on agriculture and questions of practical utility, exhibited gifts which equalled those of his predecessor.

Throughout his life he was the liberal patron of art and literature, and showed a fine discriminating taste in regard to both, while the masterly manner with which he enhanced the work that Thomas Coke had commenced, and transformed the bleak, barren land surrounding his home, is matter of history But a passionate love of beauty seemed inherent in his race, the joy in exquisite colour, in grace of outline, in perfection of detail —the striving after idealism even in the most commonplace

[1] *Coke of Norfolk and his friends*, by A. M. W. Stirling.

accessories of daily life—combined with a hunger for creation and a tireless endeavour.

Brought up in such an atmosphere, Coke's daughters developed a resultant love of art which early bore fruition. His eldest daughter, afterwards Lady Andover, was only fifteen when she painted a most remarkable picture with about five life-sized figures, of Belisarius begging—an ambitious and successful work even for an artist of more mature age; while the second daughter, afterwards Lady Anson, also showed great artistic talent. Some of her pictures, painted when she was quite young, both original portraits and copies from the old Masters, are extraordinarily clever; while the exquisite manner in which, later in life, she copied and renovated some of the delicate illuminations in the old missals at Holkham, filled Roscoe with admiration.

Both she and her sister were pupils of Gainsborough, who stayed at Holkham to teach them; and although it is impossible to tell if the master's brush improved the pupil's work, it is certainly difficult in some instances to distinguish between the paintings of the former and of the latter.

Although Lady Elizabeth did not herself develop a faculty for Art to the same extent as did her two elder sisters, the talent for which her family had become conspicuous showed itself again in the person of her second son. Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, whom we have already had occasion to mention, became an artist of no mean repute who, a friend of the members of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, is classed by posterity as one of that famous band. 'He is the finest colourist in Europe,' Burne-Jones said of him; and his works show an almost Southern love of deep, glowing colour, and a dainty imagery which drifted into fairy-tales so that he was aptly described as 'a painter of dreams.'

It is interesting, therefore, to note that the passion for Art, combined with the creative faculty, descended in three successive generations of Mrs. Pickering's family, yet in each instance it was a case of collateral, not direct, descent.

Mrs. Pickering herself did not inherit the talent which her brother developed, although as a pupil of Harding her drawings and sketches are remarkable for facility and breadth of character. But to her, as to so many of her generation, Art was primarily a question of routine, to be developed by careful instruction and conscientious training, while the imagination exhibited by the so-called pre-Raphaelite School always remained a subject for amusement rather than appreciation.

Nevertheless, she was a woman of exceptional intellect, whose cleverness lay, not in superficial accomplishments, but in deep thought and extensive study, and early did she devote herself to

the development of her children's minds. To the influence of her mentality must principally be attributed the love of intellectual pursuits and the thirst for knowledge which may be said to have characterized each member of her little family. She recognized that, during her own childhood, she had suffered much from the narrowing influence of the governesses of her day, with their limited education and their restricted outlook upon life, and she therefore determined that while her children should have every benefit of an education aided by professional teachers, they should not be abandoned to its disadvantages. No resident governess, therefore, was ever admitted into the house: masters came and went, the most efficient that money could procure, and from the first Evelyn profited by the same instruction as her brother; she learnt Greek and Latin, besides French, German and Italian; she studied classical literature, and became deeply versed in mythology: but it was the mother who inspired the actual love of knowledge as distinct from the drudgery of lessons.

In all her children, a recollection of their early years was connected with what proved to them the happiest period of each day—the hour when they were summoned to a flower-laden room, and their mother read to them from some volume of absorbing interest. To her, reading aloud was a gift; she delighted in it; and her clear, musical voice ever after seemed indissolubly linked with the books which she first made them love. The range of literature thus covered was wide and comprehensive; but where the books which were available on any particular subject did not convey the exact impression she wished to produce, she herself supplied the deficiency. Thus history, she found, was apt to be written in a fashion which failed to grip the imagination of a child, so she wrote a history of England for her children of arresting interest, dwelling on the vital facts to be remembered, and making the whole so graphic that it became to her small listeners a living actuality, teeming with romance. Scientific books, too, she found were inevitably couched in language ill-adapted to the intelligence of her audience, so she wrote for them volumes which read like a fairy-tale: she described the wonderful prehistoric world, where Man was not, but where strange beasts abounded, and the dim antediluvian forests which æons of time had fashioned into coal, pieces of which were then burning in the grate of the cosy little room; she dwelt on the discoveries of astronomy, the grand riddle of the stars which looked like glittering dust strewn over the dome of heaven; the marvels of chemistry, of geology, of the practical application of many recent discoveries. She wrote fluently, without effort, and with few erasures; indeed the charm and the facility of her style hint what success in the

literary world would have been hers had she not confined her talents solely to this labour of love.[1]

How her children appreciated her efforts may be illustrated by a trivial incident. It happened that one day a dressmaker called at the hour devoted to this daily reading, and a message consequently was sent up to the nursery that the children were not to go down to their mother's room as usual. The blow was unexpected, and the eldest boy, Spencer, afterwards a scientist of international repute, but then a minute, self-important personage, considered that this innovation was not to be borne. He therefore made his way downstairs as fast as his sturdy little legs would carry him, and boiling with rage, marched to the dining-room where the innocent offender was seated waiting till Mrs. Pickering should summon her for a fitting. As the dressmaker herself afterwards described, the door suddenly opened and a small boy strode up to her with a face crimson with rage. 'You *wicked, wicked* woman!' he exclaimed vehemently; then, stamping his little foot, he shook his fist in her face, and reiterating—'*I* say you're a wicked, wicked woman!' he rushed away sobbing as though his heart would break. It was not till later that she discovered the nature of her offence and of the animosity with which she was ever afterwards regarded by the occupants of the nursery—in short, that she had deprived them of an hour's lesson in English history!

Another result of Mrs. Pickering's instructions was that, like the mother of William De Morgan, she occasionally found herself brought to book by questions difficult of elucidation, but which, to her small audience, presented all the gravity of scientific problems. 'Of course I know that God made Heaven and Earth,' Evelyn remarked, struggling with the first intricacies of theology, '*but where did He sit when He made them?*'—While Rowland, her second son, one night after he had been lovingly deposited in his little wooden crib, sent for his mother in a condition of dire anxiety, 'Mamma,' he demanded, 'when the sun goes to bed—*who tucks him up?*' A vision of the nocturnal arrangements of the lonely planet disturbed the thoughts of the kindly little fellow, and as his father had been distressed at the uncomfortable fate of Adam and Eve, he too refused to be pacified by what seemed to him vague explanations of a harrowing problem.

Another matter which troubled him was that he gleaned from Evelyn's somewhat lurid side-lights upon religion that Christ's second coming was destined to take place in a terrific thunder-

[1] After her death, a volume was published, *Memoirs of Anna Maria Wilhelmina Pickering*, which, as originally written by her, was a far more charming collection of anecdotes, jotted down haphazard for her children, and was not intended for, nor arranged for, publication.

storm. Consequently never did an electrical disturbance of the elements occur that he was not filled with apprehension as to its possible result; and one day, hearing an exceptionally loud crash in the heavens, he ran to his mother in undisguised dismay: 'My goodness!' he exclaimed, casting a worried glance at the noisy sky, 'Don't you think *that's* enough to bring Him?'

The Pickering nursery indeed presents, in much, an entertaining contrast to the De Morgan nursery of twenty years earlier. The over-conscientious training resorted to in the former, the microscopic attention devoted to trifles, the constant chastisements for childish peccadilloes are all absent. The small Pickerings were carefully brought up; they were highly educated; the number of their pastors and masters was almost abnormal; but perhaps some of the aggressiveness of their ancestors had entered into their veins, for no instructors, however well qualified or highly remunerated, succeeded in suppressing, or even moulding, their individuality.

As between the births of the older and the younger children was a space of some years, Evelyn and her brother Spencer, who was only three years his sister's junior, were perforce companions, and remained like a generation apart from their two successors in the nursery. They were both gifted with exceptional good looks, although Evelyn, from childhood, may be said to have been handsome rather than pretty. Her features were finely formed, the nose small and straight, the mouth less regular; the eyelids covering her blue-grey eyes were full and rounded, indicative of imagination; and her hair, in long brown tresses, shading to gold, fell in waves to her waist. Her expression was full of life and intelligence, though always marked by a noticeable discontent; her hands were characteristic—small but lithe and firm, with the tapering fingers of the idealist; while her whole personality, from childhood to age, conveyed an impression of virility, of restlessness, and of a mind eager to absorb and to achieve, combined with a temperament highly strung and perhaps abnormally sensitive to suffering and to joy.

Spencer, in those nursery days, was of a more pronounced beauty than his sister, a child who inevitably arrested attention with his exquisitely formed, delicate little features, his fair skin tinted like a peach, and his hair of bright gold which fell in a luxuriant mass of curls nearly the same length as did that of his sister. Even when custom necessitated his locks being shorn, the curls, in defiance of his most laborious attempts at brushing and plastering them down, still clustered thickly over his shapely head, so that later at Eton, on account of his good looks and classical features, he was known as 'the young Antinous.' In the days of babyhood, however, George Frederick Watts enthusiastically pronounced him and his sister

Evelyn to be the most beautiful children he had ever seen, and having expressed a wish to paint Spencer, he completed a portrait begun by Cosens, which shows a little face of rare loveliness and refinement.

Meanwhile Spencer, although a nursery autocrat and possessed of an imperious temper, was completely in subjection to his sister who, by virtue of her seniority, generally made him the tool for her many escapades. 'How I envy you,' Mrs. Pickering used to relate that an affected lady once said languidly to her—'you are *so* fortunate to have a girl at the head of your nursery!'—'I thought to myself,' Mrs. Pickering used to add with amusement—'*that depends on the girl!*' for Evelyn was never a cipher or a saint.

'Why are you so glad not to have another sister?' Spencer was asked, it having been observed that he heaved a sigh of relief on being informed of the birth of his younger brother. 'Girls are such *pinchers*!' was the reply, at once fervent and concise.

None the less, at times he seems to have adopted the tactics of his sister. One day the French governess, a certain Madame Mori, came to Mrs. Pickering to ask for a private interview, professing herself to be in despair at the unmanageability of her charges. Mrs. Pickering, in order to be secure from interruption and possible eavesdropping, took the excited Frenchwoman into an inner room, off her bedroom, half dressing-room, half boudoir, which had only one exit. There, having closed the door carefully, she listened to a string of complaints uttered in voluble French, and proceeded to discuss the situation, dwelling at great length on the idiosyncrasies of the respective culprits and the wisest means to be adopted in order to bring both to a better frame of mind. By the window of the room, however, where this consultation took place, was a dressing-table, adorned in the then fashion with a pink calico cover shrouded in lace like a lady in a voluminous skirt; and suddenly from the recesses of this came a howl of agony. '*Spencer!*' was heard in piercing accents—'Oh! you *pinch* so!' A hurried investigation revealed the fact that throughout the entire interview the two delinquents had been seated in this rosy tent listening with the greatest zest to the tale of their misdeeds, and to the despairing suggestions of a possible remedy!

Out of the many now forgotten pranks of those early days one is still remembered, possibly on account of its unusual daring or its disastrous sequel. It must first be explained that, with the exception of the birthdays of Mr. Pickering and his eldest son, all such family anniversaries fell between August 26 and 30—indeed August 28 was the birthday both of Mrs. Pickering and her second son Rowland. Hence arose an opening for injustice. Although the season of such festivities might clash or overlap,

the children considered that the mere accident of date ought not to interfere with what was their right; four separate holidays were undoubtedly their due, and four separate birthday cakes; so that an attempt made by the elders to compress both feast and festivity—to make one holiday and one cake do for two events—was bitterly resented. Evelyn indeed felt that a great principle was at stake, and on the approach of a day when she maintained that one of the birthdays ought to be kept but the powers in authority decreed that lessons should be done, she boldly determined that such an injustice should not be perpetrated. Late on the evening of the day before, therefore, every lesson-book was carefully collected by her and entrusted to the care of Spencer, a small and alarmed victim. The house in Grosvenor Street overlooked a mews at the back, and Spencer, acting under his sister's orders, after dusk climbed on to the balcony railing in the rear of the house, and succeeded in thrusting the pile of lesson-books on to the roof of the neighbouring stables.

In the morning when the governess arrived, great was her astonishment upon being informed that every single lesson-book had mysteriously disappeared. The reason of the disappearance, however, was so transparent that her wrath would not be appeased, and she insisted that the books should be found. Accordingly, hour after hour throughout the day was spent in a fruitless search, the two conspirators enjoying themselves greatly, and protesting, with entire truth, that not a single volume appeared to be anywhere in the house. In this fashion the holiday was secured, and the following morning early Spencer was sent to retrieve the missing books. But unfortunately it had rained in the night; they were found to be sodden with wet, the covers of those which had been uppermost were reduced to pulp, and thus the true facts of the case were apparent. History draws a discreet veil over the sequel.

The fact that the back windows of their home commanded a view of the mews proved a never-failing source of entertainment to the children. They watched the carriages and horses come and go, they knew the various drivers by sight, and established a bowing acquaintance with some. Lord Foley's coachman in a cocked hat was the object of their never-failing admiration; and just as William De Morgan in his nursery twenty years earlier had decided that when he attained to man's estate he would be a sweep and a Jack-in-the-Green, so—alas! for the mutability of human wishes!—did Spencer Pickering determine that he would one day be a coachman and thrill all onlookers with a portly presence and envied headgear.

By and by, a species of Dumb-Crambo friendship was instituted by the children with some of the residents in the stables below, and another particularly attractive coachman and his

wife, for some inexplicable reason, were known to them by the names of the 'He ha ! ha ! ' and the 'She ha ! ha ! ' The 'She ha ! ha ! ' must have developed a decided affection towards the two mischievous sprites who signalled greetings to her from the balcony, for soon a more satisfactory mode of communication with them was established. A string was let down by the children to which pieces of toffy of their own making were attached as a gift to their unknown friend, who subsequently used to sign to them to let it descend, when she would tie on to it a little basket filled with delicious cakes and tartlets of her own baking which she watched mount to the balcony with supreme satisfaction. This mode of communication may have been suggested by hearing the nurses discuss the reprehensible behaviour of Miss De Horsey, who lived next door, and who used to electrify the respectable neighbourhood by letting down a string weighted by a bit of coal, at the hour when Lord Cardigan rode past. To this the latter attached his *billets-doux*, which were promptly hauled up by the lady, until such time as she threw the last remnant of discretion to the winds, and departed finally from her father's house to the protection of her married lover. Till that took place, however, her vagaries continued to furnish perpetual food for comment throughout Upper Grosvenor Street, as did her startling costumes ; and the children at No. 6 used to watch her set out on her horse daily, clothed in one of the remarkable riding-habits which she affected—one was a bright green cloth, one a violet velvet, and one a black velvet, with each of which she used to wear a hat adorned with nodding plumes.

Nevertheless, as Evelyn had established a human interest in regard to the denizens of the mews at the back of her home, so what was termed a balcony friendship was instituted with certain children who lived opposite, the family of Sir John, afterwards Lord, St. Aubyn. Since their respective parents were not acquainted, the children held that neither were *they* acquainted in the orthodox sense, wherefore they would pass each other in the street with a blank expression and punctiliously averted faces ; but on their opposite balconies they were friends, and a species of communication was established by signalling which was a source of amusement to each. Soon, when their respective elders were safely out of the way, little plays were enacted on each balcony for the benefit of the opposite neighbour, or charades performed with gesticulations which took the place of words, when the performers used to dress up in a fashion that amazed the passers-by who could catch occasional glimpses of them from the street below. At length, one day, Mrs. Pickering, returning early from a drive, observed a small but interested crowd gathered near her house, on the balcony of which two minute Christy minstrels with blackened faces were performing

on the bones and banjo. After this, the balcony theatricals were continued with more difficulty, on account of the closer supervision to which the would-be actors were subjected, and the Tragic Muse was principally in demand at their performances owing to the superior noiselessness of pathos to buffoonery.

A far from silent assistant on these occasions, however, was a beautiful green parrot which used to swing contentedly in a cage on the balcony of No. 6, and who may be considered to have been the unconscious instrument in an unsuspected train of events. Lady Mary Waddup, as she was called—the surname being bestowed out of compliment to the cook—had once occupied her post of vantage while the house was being painted, and ever afterwards she indulged in an accomplishment which she had learnt on this occasion. With her head cocked on one side, and a mischievous gleam in her bright eyes, she would wait with uncanny shrewdness till some unwary passer-by came near, when she would call out in a piercing voice —'Take care! Take care! Wet paint! Wet paint!' The victim of this farce would naturally start and anxiously examine his or her garments, then glance in perplexity at the paint, and next at the balcony whence came the shrill warning, but where no one was visible. Needless to say, the children rejoiced in this performance, till poor 'Lady Mary' came to an untimely end by devouring the heads of a box of matches which she pulled into her cage. The nurses in relating her sad fate always referred to the instruments of her destruction as 'Lucifer matches,' and an impression consequently gained ground amongst the small occupants of the nursery that the Prince of Darkness had specially baited the delicacy which had proved the undoing of their favourite.

It may have been the conduct of 'Lady Mary' in regard to innocent pedestrians which suggested another amusement that was in great favour with its perpetrators, till one day it miscarried in an alarming manner. Like the green parrot, the conspirators would watch from the balcony till some suitable victim was selected from amongst those who passed below, whereupon a slight shower of water would be sprinkled judiciously and fall, 'like the gentle rain from heaven,' upon the devoted head of the surprised recipient. If the victim started and, glancing up at the heavens, prepared to unfurl an umbrella, great was the triumph of the unseen onlookers; but one day the jest was carried too far. Evelyn, armed with a squirt and guarded by Spencer who acted as sentinel, hid behind the creeper on the balcony. Soon she espied a man coming down the street whose self-complacency seemed to call for drastic treatment. He was wearing pale grey trousers, white spats and shiny boots, a faultless grey top hat, a white button-hole and lavender kid

Panel of six tiles, representing a long-necked bottle with roses, the bottle itself being decorated with turquoise-blue flowers on a dark blue ground.
Height 24 inches. Width 16 inches.
[At the Victoria & Albert Muscum, London

gloves; his walk was conceited and his air of self-satisfaction was aggressive.

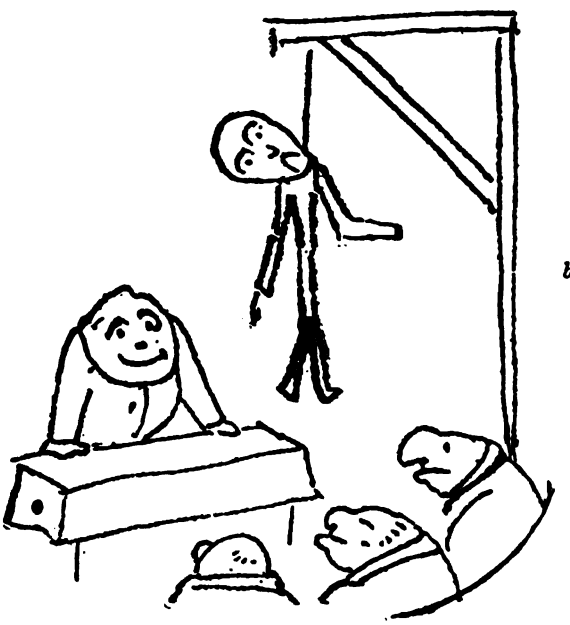
Directly he was within range, she took aim, and with a well-directed 'squirt' sent a shower upon the fop below and bobbed out of sight. She heard an exclamation, followed by a pause, and then a ring at the front-door vibrated with ominous significance through the house. In a sudden panic she fled to the nursery, while her drenched victim below demanded furiously to see 'the lady of the house.' Mrs. Pickering, on being told what had happened, in some alarm refused to go down, and sent the head nurse Loutitt, a responsible Scottish body, to pacify the injured stranger, and, incidentally, to dry him. But he would accept no apology.

'Such behaviour is a scandal!' he protested; 'I insist on seeing the boy who acted in this manner that I may give him a lesson he will not forget.' 'It was no boy,' responded the nurse firmly, 'but our young leddy. She will be doing the things she should not!' But the stranger insisted that this was not the truth—he had seen a boy upon the balcony, and unless he could have every assurance that that obnoxious boy should be flogged, he would fetch the police. At length the nurse, in self-defence, sent for Evelyn, and when a particularly gentle and pretty-mannered little girl entered, and admitted that it was she who had wantonly damaged his top hat, the stranger appeared disconcerted; he blustered more feebly, and soon, with some mild admonitions to her not to indulge again in that particular form of recreation, he seized his damp headgear and took his departure.

Apparently as a result of this untoward incident, one form of entertainment in which the children had delighted was banned by the nurses. Before the days when orthodox drawing-lessons were instituted as part of the school-room routine, they had been given little boxes of paints with which they began to draw and colour crude pictures. The mess which they made, however, with the tinted water, and the consequent damage to their clothes, was seized upon by the powers which ruled in the nursery as an excuse to forbid an otherwise harmless occupation; and in order to enforce compliance with this prohibition, all water-bottles and jugs were placed beyond the reach of small arms

Evelyn, however, who had found the amusement congenial, was determined not to be thwarted in this manner. She therefore provided herself with a doll's tea-pot, and when she went out for a walk with the nurses she lagged behind and hurriedly stole water from the gutters or puddles with which, in secret, she contrived to pursue her amusement unsuspected. A few of these early attempts at Art have survived—some flowers cleverly drawn and some spirited figures in vivid garments; but these are not more remarkable than similar attempts by other

girls of her age. What is of interest to note is the determination of so small a child and the patient persistence with which she achieved her object in spite of opposition. This must have been all the more difficult because of the extreme vigilance with which she and her brothers were guarded when out walking at that date. There had for some time been a great scare caused by the frequent cases of child-stealing which had occurred. Children had been kidnapped with diabolical cleverness and kept for a reward, or in more tragic instances had disappeared and been heard of no more. So alarmed, therefore, had Mr. Pickering become at the recurrence of this crime that he always had a nurse a-piece for each of his children, and all were well drilled in the necessity for closely guarding their charges—from the staid head-nurse, before mentioned, to a prototype of the De Morgans' 'Janey' of twenty years earlier—a pretty, younger Jane, who at the age of sixteen entered a service which she never afterwards quitted.



A Sketch in Pencil by William De Morgan.

"HANGING DAY"

CHAPTER VII

PEN-DRIFT

(To be omitted by the captious)

IN studying the psychology of a child, and striving to trace the source of its ultimate development, one inevitably seeks the clue in its first halting attempts at self-expression. For as the greater events of Life hinge on trivialities, so the growth of mentality seems equally a sequence of Chance—a perplexing tangle of Cause and Effect—in which heredity and environment are eternally dominating some erratic hazard of the die.

Of late, however, so much attention has been directed to the effusions of youthful authors and poets—most of whom in after-life belied their early promise—that one hesitates to add to the number. Yet a peep into the mind of a very young child is not without amusement, and a few quotations, unexpurgated in spelling and diction, may be given, since the reader who so prefers can, without loss of consecutiveness in the context, leave this entire chapter unread.

To Evelyn, a restless child teeming with imagination which had as yet found no adequate outlet, the idea of venting her thoughts on paper first came through an unexpected channel, and was eagerly adopted.

In the back drawing-room of the house in Upper Grosvenor Street was a large china bowl filled with little scrolls of parchment yellow with age, tied by coloured ribbons. Each of these contained a 'Fate' in verse, written in a fine, pointed hand by some ingenious ancestor. Visitors attracted by the sight of these tiny scrolls would dip their hands into the bowl and read their 'fortune' in prim, old-fashioned verse. 'They give people something to talk about when we are waiting for dinner!' Mrs. Pickering used to say if anyone asked her about these scrolls, and once she appended a story in this connexion which impressed itself on Evelyn's imagination.

Going to a dinner-party one night, she noticed the drawing-room table to be dotted about with strange penny toys and cheap wooden figures—whereupon her hostess, observing her glance at these queer ornaments, explained their use. 'Men,'

she said, 'never know what to do with their hands! I usually have nice ivories and knick-knacks on my table; but when I have a dinner-party I put them all away. If there is anything lying about, so surely the men will toy and fiddle with it till they break it. I lately had a valuable ivory destroyed that way, and the man never even noticed that he had snapped it in two! Now I put about these little rubbishes, and you will see that they answer my purpose.' And so it befell that directly some men arrived at that dinner-party, first one and then another, idling near the table, picked up the penny knick-knacks and, without noticing what these were, absently twisted and turned and toyed with them, while Mrs. Pickering and her hostess exchanged amused glances!

Possibly the crowded centre-table which figured in all drawing-rooms at that date offered an element of temptation, since eliminated, to the Victorian diner-out; but the mysterious, Scrolls of Fate in the bowl became a source of interest, not unmixed with awe, to Evelyn; and apparently, having grasped their value as conversation-providers at social functions, she determined to manufacture some duplicates on her own account. In a small ivory box are still the little rolls of paper inscribed by her with verses in a babyish hand; but surprised spinsters, testing futurity at her invitation, must have felt that the information furnished was unexpectedly decisive. One roll, with an air of relentless finality, proclaims:—

'Cast on a desert Island thou shalt be
And *canibles* shall come and devour thee!'

While another contains a grave warning against erudition carried to excess:—

'Crammed full of knowledge thou shalt burst
For craving to become the first.'

A third, indeed, suggests a sop to vanity:—

'A thousand sutors shall for thee sigh
But in a Convent thou shalt dye!'

But though expiring in a Convent might be rendered more exhilarating by the thought of those thousand unhappy suitors sighing vainly without the walls, apart from consolations such as these, all the prognostications have a sinister note; even those which contain a faint element of gaiety temper it with a counter-blast of disaster to follow.

'In the ball-room dance away
For thy life is short and gay!'

is scarcely a suggestion conducive to rendering a ball more enjoyable; while even the most cheerful of the series hints at the hollowness of seeming bliss:—

'With beauteous face and empty hart
In the world thou'll bear thy part!'

is a prophecy which, although not explicit in its indication of exactly what part its victim was to play, at least successfully conveys a sense of false merriment with an aching void beneath!

None the less, it was these foolish little 'Scrolls of Fate' which first suggested to the child the notion of trying to give some concrete form to the drifting fancies of her brain. Subsequently verses, plays and short stories poured from her pen, together with unfinished 'novels,' usually abandoned after the first few chapters for some newer idea or plot. Each attempt at fiction has an introductory preface, a solemn dedication, and an appropriate verse of unmitigated gloom. All show the same characteristic—an inability to spell the simplest words and a greater accuracy when penning big ones—indicative of recourse to a dictionary where this was understood by the small writer to be imperative. A copy-book, bearing the title *The Child's Own Fairy-Book*, written at the age of eight, opens as follows:—

PREFACE

'My object in writing this book is for the amusement of children between six and seven years old, and I greatly hope that with the help of my brother Mr. Spencer Pickering [then aged five], who has been so kind as to allow me to dedicate this book to him, I may be able to succeed.'

And the tale which follows, written by a child, herself half faëry, half sprite, is full of quaint and dainty fancies, an odd mingling of the material and the ethereal, and of many a wayward conceit which surely afterwards matured into the pictures that she painted. Of the Fairies' Palace she writes:—

'First of all I must tell you about there Palace, it was a beautiful bilding composed entirely of diamonds, and was lined inside with emeralds. There were an hundred rooms in it not including the great Hall (for I supose you know that fairys live in comunities and that every comunity has its Queen). There beds were made of gold and lined with the softest Ider down. There was too a book which was held most dear to them and was kept by their Queen Graciocia, it was called the Dumet. This Dumet contained all the Fairy's reites and cerimonies, and also all they had the right to do. Now all Fairys have spectacels without glasses and made of diamond wire and called *slumes* which they always wore but which when on you never can discern, with these wires they can see all invisibel things, and also if they have them on, they can become visibel or invisibel just as the chouse. . . .'

And one finds oneself wondering whether the little writer herself wore *slumes* which enabled her to see so much beauty in the world around not 'visibel' to others. But alas! in the story the wonderful Fairy Palace with its diamond exterior and emerald 'lining' vanishes all too abruptly to be explained away by the following sententious note:—

'The preceding fairy-tale was begun at an early age but was unfortunately never terminated as the authoress was called to more pressing duties.'

This effort is immediately followed in the same copy-book by a more ambitious work, which announces itself to be *Nora de Brant: a Novel*; and which also has a preface as follows:—

PREFACE

'Feeling the want of recreation books for the young the authoress has entered the lists with so many of her country-women to endeavour to suply the young folks of the present day with amusing and at the same time instructif tales and though some may smile at the idea of anything instructif being contained in a novel, the authoress hopes to prove that it is by no means impossible.

'M. E. P.'

Next follow verses, portending tragedy to come, and then the story begins:—

'Beautifully situated amoungst the wild mountains of Westmoorland Braiesford Hall raised its proud Wals to the admiring eye and seemed contenptiously to behold from afar the little vilage of Braiesford with its humble cottages and its pretty little country Church, its vilage green were the Children were wont to play when school was over and all its rural sceenes as it peacefully lay in the vally below. Braiesford Hall had long been in the posesion of the de Brants the family boasted of their ancestry, and could trace their pedigree back to the time of the quonquest, and had received the grant of Braiesford lands from Herrie the eight in the year 1511.

'The present Mr. de Brant was a young man who had not yet attained his thirtieth year his father had unfortunately died from a fall from his hoarse when he was very young and he had thus become heir to the Braiesford estate at the early age of ten. Accustomed to have everything his own way, to be made much of by everyone, with an indulgent mother, who knew not how to say No! and with almost everything he could wish for at his disposal, the spoilt child grew up to be a selfish pasionate man who could not bare to be contradicted in the slightest thing. His mother died shortly after he had come of age, and his two sisters, Jane and Mageret, who were some years older than himself, prefered living in a small house near London than remaining at the hall, as he proposed they should.

'About the time when our story begins it was rumoured in the vilage that the Squire had a Lady Love up in the great City, and it certainly looked very like it for he was never to be found at the hall, if anyone inquired after him the poudered footman was sure to answer with a profound bow that his Master was in London and that the last thing they had heard of him was (and here Mr. Jhon would give a captavating smile)

that he was in perfect health. Many and Many were the conjectures made by the inquisitive vilagers, but they all agreed in one point that was namely that Mr. Jhon knew something about the matter, and though Suzanna Mairy, the prittiest girl in the vilage set to work to discover all about it, she was bafled at the first onset, foi alas her shining curls and best bonnet seemed to have no efect on the iron heart of Mr. Jhon, for he merely grined and shook his curly whig and replied that " his Master had gone to town on business " so poor Suzanna had to give up the case as quite hopeless, but the curiosity of the vilagers was soon to be gratyfied for not long after the news reached Braiesford that the Squire had been married in London and that he and his bride would pass the night at the Hall as they proceeded on their marraige tour in Scotland.

' We will not dwell upon the bustle of preparations that imidiatly took place for the reception of the bride, nor upon the expectations of the old gossips as they sat over their sociable cups of tea and wondered what Madam would be like, but will at once pass to the next day when, about six o'clock in the evening, the sound of hoarse's hoofs were heard in the distance and in an instant the road was lined with the egar vilagers who were anxious to catch a glimpse of the bride as the carraige drove rapidly along and passed under the triumphal ach which had been erected at the entrance of the vilage the people gave three loud cheers. The Squire kept bowing and smiling at the window but not one glimpse of his lady did the disopointed vilagers get, as she was tow tired to do anything but lay languidly back on the cushioned seat. As they drove up the broad carraige drive that led to the Hall Mr. de Brant bade his wife look at her future home expressing a hope that she was satisfied with it she replied in the affirmatif but seemed too weary to pay much attention to anything.

' But it is time that I should introduce you to the newly married couple it is an old saying and one that is generaly acted upon that ladies ought to come before Gentlemen, but I mean to brak through every sense of propriety and good maners and begin with the Gentleman :— '

Whereupon the writer at once proceeds to describe Mervyn de Brant as ' a tall substantial-looking man ' who considered himself ' the most important personage in the universe ' and whose temper was uncertain as he was ' pasionate beyond mesure.' His wife whom he had just married at ' St. George's, Hannover Square,' wore an enormous ' cheegnon ' and was exceedingly haughty, principally, it seems, because her father had been killed at the Battle of Waterloo. This being so, apart from the little interest which she took in the first sight of her new home, she proceeded to flout the old servants who were assembled to greet her on her arrival and who, including the ' captavating Mr. Jhon,' took great offence at the airs of herself and her lady's maid, by name ' Mrs. Struttings.' Hence occurred the first matrimonial tiff between the newly married couple. The story relates :—

' Mr. de Brant was by no means pleased with his wife's conduct towards the servants, and therefore in the first spare moment he reproaved her mildly for the want of afferbility in her manner.

' " Indeed Mervyn " was the haughty rejoinder, " I could not have

believed it of you the idea of your expecting me to shake hands and make much of the domestics ! "

' " I did not mean to offend you," retorted Mr. De Brant, " but then you see, my dear Gertrude, the servants here are not like your mother's and are not used to such treatment as you gave them this evening and I am affraid that they will take it ill."

' " They must learn to take nothing amiss that *I* choose to give them," was the answer, accompanied with a proud toss of the head.

' Mr. de Brant took no notice of this last speech of Gertrude's, but merely said, as he took up his candle and prepared to leave the room, " The carriage is ordered at nine to-morrow morning and we must start punctually."

' " That is to say if I choose to go ! " was the reply. Mr. de Brant made no answer but went out slaming the door violently after him and strode upstairs in no very pleasant frame of mind.

' The next morning they started for Scotland, but it is not my intention to follow them on their plesent and amusing tour and as we have the privilage of skipping over a month or so at our pleasure we will do so on the present occasion and turn at once to the time whene Mr. and Mrs. de Brant returned and took up their stationary abode at the Hall.

' Things went on pretty quietly on the whole with occasional little outbraks, Gertrude going her way and her husband his, now and then their comeing in collision with each other, and so the first year of their married life passed tolerably smoothly.

' The next object of important to which I shall call your attention is to the birth of a little son which greatly delighted Mr. de Brant and who was christened——'

But apparently the effort of finding a suitable title for that son and heir to the lands inherited from the ' quonquest ' gave pause to the inspiration of the young writer, for the ' stationary ' life of the de Brants comes to an abrupt termination, and in a slightly older hand-writing the authoress has added sententiously :—

' *This novel begun at an early age was unfortunately never terminated as the author was at that period so fully occupied with poetical and dramatic compositions, that no time was left for the more humble prose.*'

Nevertheless, in her school-room compositions, the ' humble prose ' still survived, and caused some dismay to those who had to deal with it. Her Parisian daily governess, a prim and decorous lady, at first used to set her as a task to be prepared out of lesson-hours, some original correspondence in French, and rashly left the subject to her pupil's own selection, ' Que peut on faire avec une telle enfant ? ' she exclaimed later as she placed in Mrs. Pickering's hands the following result.

Monsieur le Marquis de Valèse à Madame la Marquise de Valèse.

' PARIS, *Mars 6me.*

' CHÈRE ÉPOUSE,—

' Je ne sais comment commençea cette lettre, j'ai tant de choses à te dire, et j'ai bien peur de te fâcher ; mais pour me donner la force qu'il

me faut, je m'imaginerai que tes jolies lèvres me sourient en disant " *Continué, Continué,—je te pardonnerai tout !* " Et cette pensée, chère épouse, m'encourage à t'avouer une petite maladresse de ma part.

' L'autre soir je suis aller chez Monsieur le Dindonbare. Au moment de me retirer il me dit—" Où allez vous ? " Je lui repondit que j'allais rentrer chez moi. " Passez la soirée tout seul ? " me demanda il. " Oui," dis-je, " il le faut bien, puisque ma femme n'est pas avec moi." " Est ce qu'il vous faut toujours votre femme pour vous tenir compagnie ? " dit-il, " Venez avec moi, mon cher, et je vous trouverez de bien meilleur compagnie que celle de Madame votre femme ! "

' " Monsieur," repondis je, " pour que me prenez vous, que vous m'insulté comme cela à mon nez ? " " Pardon," reprit-il, en tirant ses moustaches, et en saluant, " je riais, car en verité je trouve Madame de Valèse la dame la plus agréable du monde, et je voulais simplement vous proposer de m'acompagner à la salle de billard où je vais, pour vous faire oblier vos peines vous devez en avoir en quittant une personne aussi aimable que votre femme l'est, pendant quelques heures à ce jeux innocent." Je lui repondis que ce n'était pas dans mes principles de frequenter les salles de Billard. " Oh, je comprends," dit il avec un sourire dédaigneux, " quand on est pauvre il faut être économe—vous avez raison, mon cher ! " Maintenant, je te demande, chère epouse, pouvais-je me laisser insulter comme cela—c'était risquer mon honneur et le sien de ne pas lui montrer que je n'avais pas peur de perdre quelque sous ! et en pensant ainsi je l'accompagnai comme il l'avait demandé.

' Au commencement tout alla bien, et je gagnai à chaque tour ; cela m'encouragea à jouer de plus haut en plus haut, mais Dame Fortune, toujours capricieuse, me quitta soudainement pour favoriser mes adversaires et je perdis tout ce que j'avais gagné, et encore bien davantage. J'étais desolé, mais on me dit qu'il fallait revenir le lendemain pour regagner ce que j'avais perdu. Je suivis leur avis, mais au lieu de gagner, je perdis comme auparavant ; on me encouragea toujours avec l'espérance de gagner, en revenant de jour en jour, mais hélas ! je perdis *d'énormes* sommes d'argent *chaque soir*. Et que suis-je aujourd'hui ? un homme ruiné ! oui ! ruiné, chère épouse, car je dois plus de cent mille francs, a chaque pas que je fais je vois la ruine.

' Mes créanciers, autrefois si obligeants, sont a present insatiables pour leur argent. En effet, cher épouse, je ne vois qu'un chemin à prendre, et c'est celle-ci. Il faut que tu renvois toutes les domestiques du Château, Juliette et Bernard excepté. Il faut vendre tes chevaux et tous les chiens de chasse ; et puis j'ai une petite chose à te demander, chère épouse, tu sais ton collier de diamands, et bien, ne voudras tu pas le vendre pour l'amour de ton mari ? c'est un sacrifice j'en conviens, mais du rests je te promets que si jamais je deviens riche je t'en donnerai un autre. Mais pour le present je connais un bon Juif qui achetera volontiers ton collier,—envois le lui. Il demeure 45 rue . . . Paris.

' Et maintenant, chère épouse, il faut que je te dise adieu. Ecris bientôt et pardonne moi de ce que je l'ait fait, ne sois dure pour moi, et pense que ton mari à tout fait pour le mieux. Je t'embrasse de tout mon cœur et je suis toujours ton fidèle, mais malhaureux, époux.

' ALEXIS DE VALÈSE.'

Réponse

' MONSIEUR,—

' Je trouve que votre *petite maladresse* en est *une bien grande*. Et je vous disai—" Monsieur, que votre imagination vous a trompé, car mes jolies lèvres ne s'ouvriront que pour vous dire des imprecations. En

verité, vous êtes fou ; une dame de qualité sans domestiques ! je crois que vous avez laissé votre tête, comme votre argent, à la Salle de billard Ne comptez pas sur mes diamants pour payer vos dettes car vous ne les aurez pas, ni votre " bon Juif " non plus. Ne vous presentez pas devant mes yeux, car je vous previens qu'ils n'ont pas plus de pitié pour vous que mes lèvres.

' Je suis Monsieur, votre épouse furieuse et indignée.

' ANGELIQUE DE VALÈSE.' [1]

To the average child, humour of a primitive type alone is comprehensible ; its laughter is stirred by trifles which make no appeal to its elders, while it will treat what to them is ludicrous with a profound seriousness. But the sense of wit in a child is rare, and is likely to be fraught with inconvenience to its pastors and masters. Thus it is doubtful whether the matter-of-fact English governess was better pleased than her French prototype when she, too, having suggested an original composition in her native tongue, her pupil, with assumed gravity, presented her with a Dantesque description in blank verse of ' Pluto's drear domain.' This gave an all-too graphic picture of a world shrouded in eternal fog, permeated with a fœtid odour and conspicuous, for snakes which writhed, skeletons which groaned, phantoms which howled and wailed, and lakes of gore !

As to the ' dramatic and poetical compositions ' in which the child indulged privately, their variety is endless, though of these the most ambitious are likewise the best, and are too long to quote. All, however, exhibit a happy knack of phraseology, of vivid description, of close observation and appreciation of beauty in the world around. But they reveal, too, an unexpected undercurrent of sadness mingled with an attraction to the gruesome in life, almost morbid in its intensity.

Pessimism is admittedly a phase of youth ; there is an age at which we all write verses and hug discontent. It is as though to the young and healthy the mystery of that darker side of life with which they are still unacquainted attracts with all the force of a fantastic contrast—there is a luxury in melancholy to which they cling in thought. Still more do all stirrings of genius, all aspiration, all ultimate achievement, find their root in this acceptance of sadness as one of the great adjuncts of life. ' Believe me,' said Colehurst to Mary Crockenden, ' that all the noblest thought, noblest work, noblest friendship is rooted and grounded in profound sadness. Sad—everything's sad—fair things and foul things alike.'

It may be some dim realization of this truth which makes the appeal of sorrow to a mind that has never tasted its actuality ; yet there are those of us who have suffered more keenly from the

[1] A few corrections to the grammar in the above, apparently made by the Governess, have been allowed to stand in order that the French may be more intelligible to the reader ; otherwise the original is untouched.

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE MIST

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

[In the possession of Mrs. Spencer Pickering.

visionary griefs and terrors of our early days than is possible in later life when we face reality with a sense of proportion and a philosophy that childhood lacked.

As will have been gathered, no home could have been more free from gloom than the sunny house in Upper Grosvenor Street, and no child less weighted with the sorrows of existence than was Evelyn; yet with the perversity of an imaginative temperament, all that was the antithesis to her own lot appealed most keenly to her in those early years. Thus if she describes a scene of lovers wandering in a grove, of children playing in the sunlight, of flowers blossoming on the bank of a silver stream in spring-time—though she does so with a lightness and grace unusual in a child, she dwells, too, with insistence on the thought of how Death is hovering near to pounce on these lovely living things at their moment of supremest bliss. So, also, when she turns to Nature, what attracts her is the awful solitude of some lonely mountain peak, the mysterious depths of some eerie forest, the rattle of the thunder, the roar of the tempest over a rocking sea, or some dank ruin, frightening in its silence, with its breath of present decay and its whisperings of a ghostly Past.

> 'In the pale moonlight, cold and dim
> Stands the lone ruin, drear and grim;
> Lichens creep o'er the crumbling walls,
> The dark bat haunts the silent halls;
> Death is heralded by decay
> Through darkening night, and brightening day. . . .'

There is a lilt in the verses which runs through the descriptions of the same scene under varying phases—especially in the winter:—

> 'Then the wild hail-storm hoarsely rings
> Death is the doom of earthly things!'

Even when a passage occurs of obvious bathos, this—like the uncertain spelling—serves to mark what we might otherwise be in danger of forgetting, the extreme youth of the writer and the consequent need for leniency in criticism. Most of her verses, it must be observed, were written about the age of nine—none after the age of thirteen; and they are given here only to illustrate the character-study of a child with undeveloped faculties, but teeming with imagination and—so much may be conceded—possessed of an unusual fluency of language. Perhaps for unadulterated gloom, the verses in which she describes the sensations of a murderer and of his victim are the most typical—indeed various poems deal with this topic, which was evidently a favourite one.

1

'A prisoner lay in a gloomy cell,
With the chains around him clinging
Watching the shadows that deep'ning fell
And despair his heart was wringing.

2

'He knew the doom that awaited him well,
For conscience his heart was stirring,
Repeating that when on the scaffold he fell
'Twould be Justice—crimes avenging.

3

'His guilty thoughts cast a drearful spell
O'er the dim light all surrounding;
He fancied a murdered form he could tell
From the darkness slow emerging.

4

'The shape which his fancy had beckon'd forth
In a bloody pall was shrouded,
From its vacant sockets, the flames of wrath
With revengeful fury darted.

5

'Its horrid features with gore were streaming,
And no sound the enchantment broke,
Till at last, its spectre frame erecting,
With an accent of rage it spoke

6

'"Hark! murderer, who mads't my spirit fly
Down a prayerless path to Judgment,
In the place where fiery seas roll high
There's an endless pit of torment.

7

'"There tortures await thee in angry shape,
Which thy fetter'd ghost shall endure,
From that region of pains there is no escape,
Eternity hath thee secure!

8

'"'Tis there in that land of bitterest woe
That vengeance shall fan my hot soul,
And the flaming billows that o'er thee flow
Shall rejoice me beyond control!"

9

'The fantome vanished with mocking howl,
But the prisoner never moved;
And the night stole in with a darksome scowl
Which the stillness vainly reproved.

10

'With the early morn the grim geolier flings
Wide open the prison's drear door.
The sentence of death in his hand he brings—
But the captif lies dead on the dungeon floor!'

It must be admitted, so unpleasant is the disposition of the ghost who, as it forcibly complains, was sent—

'Down a prayerless path to Judgment'

that one's sympathies are enlisted on behalf of the 'captif' whom it maliciously haunts and taunts. But in the next venture there is little to choose between the conduct of murderer and murdered, since their respective rôles are transposed directly one is no longer in the flesh.

1

'See the ocean, calmly sleeping,
Glitters 'neath the sun's hot ray;
Swift a little bark is skimming
On its smooth and easy way.

2

'All alone two sailors sitting
Row across the dreamy deep;
One of treachery is thinking,
And his murdrous vigils keep.

3

'Money that the other's bearing
To the not far-distant shore
Tempts him, and the dagger plunging
Bids his victim live no more.

4

'List the corpse so drearly sinking
In the peaceful rip'ling sea,
Calls for vengeance, and awakening
Nature answers to the plea.

5

'Hark how wild the storm is thrilling!
Bright the lightning scans the sky,
Dark the thunder-clouds are rolling,
Roaring swells the water high.

6

'On the billows roughly tossing
At the mercy of the storm,
In the fated boat hard rowing
Sits the frighted murd'rer's form.

7

'High before him, gloomy towering
Stands the saving rocky shore;
But to reach it, vainly struggling,
Doomed, he hears the tempest roar.

8

'See a spectre grim arising
From the white and feath'ry spray,
With a bloody halo gleaming
Round his gory locks astray.

9

'With revenge its eyes are glist'ning
Gazing on the battling bark;
And astride the waves it's riding
While the scene grows still more dark.

10

'Terror now the murd'rer seizing
Makes him row with all his might;
But the restless ghost advancing
Drags him down to lasting night!'

Another poem describes the sensations of a criminal flying from his own haunted imagination and how he seeks in vain for peace in every possible locality, till finally—

'He stands upon a rocky ledge
A swelling torrent rolls below;
He leaps from off the craggy edge
And Death conceals his tale of woe!'

The call of the sea rings through most of her verses; and later in life she used to say that no holiday inland was of any use to her, so keenly did she hunger for the tonic to brain and nerve which she found in the dancing waves and the brine-drenched air. The following with its mingling of gory ghosts and a stormy ocean is also characteristic.

1

'Oh! Mother hark, how the wind howleth loud;
See, swift o'er the sky flits the darken'd cloud,
And the roar of the waves so grand and proud
The coming storm foretells.
The sea-gull stoops on her silvery wings,
To the watchful sailors the warning brings,
The crested billows the alarum rings—
Higher the warter [*sic*] swells.

2

'Oh! Mother hark to the booming gun,
Mornful the sounds o'er the ocean come,
Some vessel must on the rocks have run;
She calls for help in vain.
Her knell is the thunder's distant roar;
The signals are hushed for evermore,
And the surges break where she lay before;
A wreck floats on the main!

3

'Oh! Mother hark to the voice of the storm;
It conjures up many a shadowy form
That the living have long since ceased to mourn,
To ride on the gloomy wave.
And visions of heroes, grim and gory,
Haunt the deep with their woeful story;
And the white foam forms their crown of glory,
Down in their wartery grave.'

Perhaps one of the most imaginative of these productions is the tale of a lost child whirled away by the Spirit of the Lightning. No stress need be laid upon the closeness with which the child who wrote it had studied the moods of Nature to describe them so faithfully.

1

'See the golden sunset fading
Into ev'ning's darksome shades,
And the night damps slowly creeping
Through the forest's hidden glades.

2

'Hark the lost one, loudly weeping,
Calls in vain for friendly aid,
None to hear and, gently guiding,
Homeward lead the drooping maid.

3

'Silence now o'er all is brooding,
And the pines wave drear on high,
Gold-fringed clouds are quickly flitting
O'er the sullen threat'ning sky.

4

'List how wild the storm is brewing;
Hear the thunder's distant roar;
Through the woody mazes wand'ring
Strays the child, lone, worn and sore.

5

'Lo the Spirit, gaily riding
On its flashing lightning steed,
Stoops, and quick the girl uplifting
Hurries on with mad-like speed.

6

'Far behind the woodlands leaving
Swift they scour the Heaven's dark brow,
Then, with sudden fury turning,
On the earth they lighten now.

7

'In the cities fear arousing
As they rend the gloomy pall
Which the sleeping, soft, is shrouding,
Wakening to the tempest's call.

8

O'er the desert widely ranging,
Flashing on its sandy planes,
Far o'er unknown wilds advancing
Where drear desolation reigns.

9

'Hark the ocean billows raging,
Shouting loud their triumph song,
As the wrecks, sad witness bearing
To their vict'ry, drift along.

10

'On the foaming pathways glancing
Urging on the fir'y (*sic*) horse
See the riders swiftly flashing
O'er the sailor's wave-toss'd corse.

11

'Drear the scene—the tempest howling
Greets the phantom's gladdened ear—
But the moments onward wearing
Bid the ling'ring dawn appear.

12

'See the pale grey streaks are spreading
Heralding the coming day;
On their breath an angel floating
Clothed in glorious array.

13

'Lo, of Peace the banner raising,
Calm, she lulls the restless sea;
While the hurrican abating
Fright'ed, makes the Spectre flee.

14

'See those cloud-barred gates that opening
Show the awful sights within,
Lakes of flame high inward rolling
Curling smoke, and deaf'ning din!

THE STORM SPIRITS

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

Reading from left to right—Flood, in wet, yellow draperies; Cloud, in a sombre blue; and Lightning, in orange and flame-colour. They are passing over a wild sea, which is lit by the glare of the lightning and the fitful gleam of a pallid moon.

[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

15

'Now the fork-legged courser, starting,
Panting snorts the murky air;
Vain the Spirit madly struggling
—Both are doom'd to enter there.

16

'Feel its tightened hold relaxing
As it drops the trembling child;
See its hideous form that, fighting,
Flounders in that chaos wild.

17

'Now those drearsome portals closing
Hide that place of woe from sight,
Till, when next the doors unfolding,
All shall aid the whirlwind's flight.

18

'Angel forms are brightly beaming
Thronging in the dewy morn,
Floods of glory lightly blending
With the sober tints of dawn.

19

'Light the little maiden bearing
Resting on their gorgeous wings,
While the scented breeze that's playing
Echoes of sweet music brings.

20

'See the golden visions breaking
On the child's large, wond'ring eyes,
Shouts of joy that, never ceasing,
Welcome her beyond the skies!'

Despite the halting metre and the obvious bathos of certain lines, noticeably where the lost child is described as 'lone, worn *and sore*,' there is a verve and swing about this little poem which holds the attention. One feels the terror of the coming storm, the lightning flashing over earth and sky, the muttered thunder, the bellowing tempest, and then the contrast of the peaceful dawn, with its tinted clouds and scented breezes, heralding the angelic welcome to the dead child. Long years afterwards the little writer painted a picture called 'The Storm Spirits' wherein Lightning, Cloud and Flood are seen by the gleam of a fitful moon riding over an angry sea; and the flame-hued drapery and wild beauty of the first Spirit was surely the outcome of those childish dreams.

With like realism, she wrote of the days of Odin, so that when she depicts 'Valhalla's mighty halls,' one can hear the uproar as

'The gods and heroes hurry in, To quaff the sparkling wine,' and the sudden lull when Odin bids the feast begin, and they 'drink his health in dead men's skulls.' There is, too, the genuine joy of battle in the following:—

1

'See the snow so thickly falling
Shrouds the earth in white array;
Nature waits with dread foreboding
Twilight of the fatal day.

2

'Now the sun in sinking glory
Sheds arround its golden light;
See advancing, grim and gory,
Fenris, eager for the fight.

3

'Onward like a torrent rushing
Springs the monster at its prey,
And the flaming orb devouring
Thus begins the deadly fray.

4

'Next, the moon in silv'ry splendour
Falls a victime to the foe,
All the starry heights surrender
To destruction's gloom below.

5

'Hark the tottr'ing mountains tumble,
Low'ring darkness veils the earth;
Rocks from their foundations crumble,
Wild confusion now takes birth.

6

'Now the foaming ocean rolling,
Breaks with fury past the shore,
O'er the land unbounded rushing
Thund'ring with a deafening roar.

7

'See the gates of Heaven are op'ning
Satur comes in fire arrayed,
Now the Bridge of Bifrost[1] crossing
Quick the battle ranks are made.

8

'Hark! the Serpent, loudly hissing,
Coils his giant form in vain,
Fate's decree that, fiercely bruising,
Thor shall perish on the plain.

[1] The bridge which spans heaven and earth. In Scandinavian Mythology, the rainbow is this bridge, and its colours are attributed to the precious stones which bestrew it.

9

'Lo! the trumpet deeply sounding,
Heimdal rushes to the strife,
See Igrasil's[1] boughs are trembling,
Woe betiding Odin's life.

10

'See the streams of blood are welling,
Odin now his death hath found,
Wide the caves of Hell are gaping,
Chaos reigns on all arround!

11

'Wild the roaring flames ascending,
Loud the triumph song of Death
Air and ocean all-consuming
With its heated, flaming breath!'

'The Sprite of the Bog' is another poem which shows the same love of phantoms, of tempest and of ultimate disaster; while for unadulterated gloom, the 'Tragedy of Virginia,' a long play written at the age of ten as a birthday present to the dramatist's mother, and bound in lively blue ribbon, surpasses the rest in blood-curdling language and dramatic situations. More placid in tone, though full of melancholy, is the following:—

TO THE SWALLOW.

'Oh! bird ever journeying
Far on the wing,
To thee doth thy wandering
Happiness bring?
Oh! tell me, in crossing
The mighty ocean,
Do the billows rolling
In ceaseless motion,
Of joy to thee whispering
Urge on thy flight?
Or dost thou go sorrowing
Through darksome night?
O'er thy path no hope shedding
Its brightening ray,
Thy drear fate bemoaning,
And cheerless thy way;
No soft voice repeating,
In joyful strain,
Of the longed-for ending
Of all thy pain;

[1] Or Ygsdrasil, the great ash-tree, which, in Scandinavian Mythology, binds together heaven and earth and hell. Its branches extend over the whole earth, its top reaches heaven, and its roots hell. The three Fates sit under the boughs spinning the events of Man's life.

No star on thee shining
With friendly light,
Thy flight enlivening
Glittering bright?
Doth the storm in brooding
Over the sea,
And the waters swelling
Scowl darkly on thee?
Oh! rather believing
Thy silvery wings
Onward thee bearing
To ever-bright things,
N'er knew the sad meaning
Of Earth's fading scenes,
Leave me fancying still,
In fantastic dreams,
That thy white wings are gleaming
A shimmering streak,
Like a beacon from Heaven
Where Earth is so bleak!'

Perhaps of all the childish poems, the following, in its quietude and simplicity, is the most attractive:—

1

'My love lies deep,
Under the ground,
And Autumn's gloom
Is gath'ring round.

2

'The ouled[1] flaps
Her dusky wings;
Shadows of night
The north wind brings.

3

'The place is cold,
And dead leaves lie
Sadly courting
The wintry sky.

4

'My love was fair,
Her eyes shone bright,
They lit my soul
Like stars the night.

5

'Her locks of hair
Were bright as gold,
And her lips breathed
Deep joys untold;

[1] Owlet.

6

'And o'er my soul
Her presence beamed,
And like the sun
Life-giving gleamed.

7

'Come mourn with me
For I am sad,
For she is gone
That made me glad.

8

'Wild let me weep
The hours away,
Drear is the night
And drear the day.

9

'My heart is broke,
My hope is fled,
For lies my love
Among the dead.

10

'My love lies deep
Under the ground;
The winter winds
Blow cold arround.

11

'The cypress tree
Is crowned with snow,
Shrouded in white
The graves lie low.

12

'The snow is soft
And very white;
Chill blows the blast
At dead of night.

13

'I will lay me down
On the cold ground,
Falling snow-flakes
Gather arround. . . .

14

'Through the wan sky
A radiance bright
Gleams o'er the hills;
A path of light!

15

'And a spirit fair,
Noiseless descending,
Love, life and peace
Is gently blending.

16

'Oh Love in Glory
With crownéd brow
I feel thine arms
Arround me now—

17

'Soft thy kisses
Warm thy breath
Vision of Love—
Angel of Death!'

And again, many years afterwards, the little writer painted a picture which seemed to be the outcome of her childish visions. It is entitled 'The Angel of Death,' and its haunting charm can be conveyed by no colourless reproduction.

In a lovely land a girl is seen seated upon a rock. Her robe is of pink; her slim figure is outlined against an expanse of golden sunset sky. Only in the distance a sinister note is struck in that gracious landscape where, afar, beasts of prey are seen prowling among the bones of the dead.

And beside the girl stands the Form of Death himself, one finger already outstretched to still the throbbing of her slender throat. At his touch she is drooping like a withered flower; her face is waxing pale, her eyes are closed, the blight of a great weariness is upon her . . . and far off the beasts and the birds of prey are waiting.

Yet this Death which is stifling her young breath is no King of Terrors. From his enshrouding draperies of wonderful blue his face looks out passionless and calm with a beauty which is unearthly; his gaze is bent upon the dying girl with a tenderness which is infinite. Relentless it may be; stern of set purpose as befits the instrument of an immovable Fate; but in its serene grace is a tranquillity which is holy; for this Angel of Death is the Angel of Eternal Peace.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THORNY WAY

FROM the days when Evelyn stole water out of the gutters in order to paint, this occupation became more and more of an obsession, and still more was it looked at askance by her elders. The fact that she began to neglect other branches of her education for the study of drawing, and that soon, with the exception of music, everything which tore her away from her pencil or her brush was resented by her, was noted and lamented. While still quite a child, so great became her absorption in what was looked upon as a passing mania, that it was feared her health would suffer; and at length, as in nursery days, the mandate went forth that she was not to paint, while her drawing-master was secretly given instructions to tell her that she had no artistic talent, and would be well advised to turn her energies in another direction.

In acting thus, her parents were influenced by dual motives —first, the belief that her devotion to Art was not serious; secondly, the fear that it might become so.

To comprehend their attitude, it is necessary to reconstruct the Victorian outlook, already referred to. In a certain section of Society at this date Art was viewed with patronizing favour —but it was essential that it should be Art kept within proper bounds. As a toy of the dilettante, or an accomplishment of the well-educated, it was obviously praiseworthy, being an intellectual pursuit; as a serious profession it was another matter. Once upon a time Grub Street had fawned upon Mayfair, and depended for the very staff of life on the success of its fawning. The legend still lingered and extended to other products of the intellect besides literature. There was a suspicion—though not formulated in actual words—that painting as a profession savoured of a connexion with trade—of work which could be bought and sold; moreover, it was linked with a Bohemianism which could not be tolerated in good Society. Artists were people who wore long hair and impossible clothes, and who affected to admire much that sensible people saw to be absurd. The Old Masters were in a different category principally

because they were old. They represented the accepted opinion of generations, and to admire their works must therefore be evidence of a cultivated mind. Moreover, the men who had painted those *chefs-d'œuvre* were dead and had become part of History. It did not matter now what had been their social status or their idiosyncrasies when alive.

Baldly expressed, this was the attitude of many Philistines of that day; and even among those who despised the inherent snobbishness of such views, it was a force to be reckoned with. Evelyn's uncle, Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, had furnished a case in point. It mattered nothing that his pictures were like exquisite Fairy Tales, that the colour glowed from his canvas in radiant loveliness. His choice of a profession was considered eccentric by the members of his own family—one to be tolerated, not approved. Reading the correspondence of the period one sees that the front of his offence was an impression that it had landed him with unconventional acquaintance who held odd views about the observance of Sunday; and it was remarked as at least a matter for congratulation that he personally remained well-groomed and in all externals 'a gentleman.' Nevertheless, he was referred to as 'poor Roddy,' and his highest flights of fancy evoked a smile. His mother—although a clever, intellectual woman—made no happier comment on his choice of a life-work than was summed up in her fervent exclamation—'Thank God! it is at least harmless!' For the god of the Victorians, despite certain contradictions in Biblical history, was essentially well-bred.

Admittedly, these were the traditions of a certain section only of the community, but it was, unfortunately, the section to which Evelyn belonged. Twenty years earlier, William De Morgan had discovered that 'Art, however high on the slopes of Parnassus,' was considered 'socially low'; and that 'the *Élite* . . . might be amateurs, but not professionals.' The passing of years had done little to modify this opinion; and the view that 'Art was altogether unsuited for the son of a Gentleman' then complained of by him, was, in the present instance, accentuated when the daughter of a Gentleman wished to adopt it professionally.

The attitude of Evelyn's mother in regard to the situation which thus arose was, she admitted, that of the proverbial hen who discovers she has hatched a duckling. 'I want a daughter—not an artist!' she complained. Not unnaturally she wanted a girl to be a companion and a pride to her, one who would fulfil the accepted rôle of the young woman of her day. Well-educated, well-read and well-bred, she would, in due course, 'come out' in the usual fashion; she would take part in innocent pleasures in really good society; eventually she would

marry satisfactorily to become a model wife and mother, and finally go down to the grave beloved, revered—and quickly forgotten. This was the destiny mapped out for Evelyn; and it was difficult for her elders to grasp the type of mind which might regard such a fate as it appeared to the fiery Bashkirtseff, '*Se marier et avoir des enfants—chaque blanchisseuse peut faire autant!*'

So Evelyn, scenting antagonism in the very air she breathed, outwardly acquiesced in the verdict of prohibition, while inwardly resolved to defy it. She had by this date been promoted from the nursery to a room of her own—a small apartment on the floor occupied by her father and mother. This close vicinity to her parents was unfortunate in that the smell of paint was apt to penetrate through any existing crevices, but she at once proceeded to paste up the chinks of the doorways with putty and brown paper. Subsequently, she spent many hours in solitude there ostensibly studying—with the key turned in the lock. All evidence of paint or canvas was concealed. At other times, if she could escape from the nurses or governesses, she took refuge in Grosvenor Square, whither she carried a bag, presumably to hold her books. This bag, which also accompanied her whenever she went away from London, had been ingeniously contrived by her with a false bottom, and in this false bottom were hidden all the materials requisite for drawing.

So she worked and studied; and before the age of twelve she was painting in oils. But the results of her labour were more difficult to hide than the materials with which she did it, and in consequence she utilized every surface which presented itself as available for her purpose. She had little pocket money, so she secreted blocks of wood to draw upon, or used the insides of box-lids, since it was unlikely that anyone would search these for drawings. As a further precaution, when working, she always had a piece of drapery ready to fling over the paraphernalia which might otherwise have revealed her occupation.

At length one day the inevitable happened. In her eagerness to get to work she forgot to lock the door, and her mother entered before she had time to conceal what she was doing. The girl burst into excited tears, and declared she had been forced into deception because she could not live without painting. After that a virtue was made of necessity, and opposition was grudgingly withdrawn. If paint she must, it was better to paint well than badly; so a first-class drawing master was again engaged who, for a guinea an hour, condescended to instruct her in copying fruit and flowers. Evelyn promptly explained to him that what she wanted was to learn the anatomy of human beings, not of plants; but he turned a deaf ear to all her representations, and assured her that the subjects he selected were a

more suitable study for a young lady. She thereupon, eager to convince him that she was in earnest, purchased a jointed wooden model, and from it drew a careful study of the male nude which, on his next visit, she firmly submitted for his approval. The irate master, scandalized at what he considered a most unlady-like proceeding, threw up his post, and Evelyn vented her satisfaction by drawing an excellent portrait of him with his head bristling with goose-quills.

An incident occurred about this date which illustrates how she regarded everything solely in its relation to Art. One day her mother received some tickets for a French play from a well-meaning friend, and Evelyn being a remarkably good linguist, it was felt that the opportunity for her to follow the dialogue in a foreign tongue should not be missed. Unfortunately the play proved to be 'French' in plot as well as language; and, as the *risqué* story unfolded, Mrs. Pickering watched her daughter in some anxiety. For the latter sat apparently absorbed in the acting, her eyes glued to the stage, her face glowing with excitement. At length, when the curtain had fallen on the noxious performance, Mrs. Pickering, anxious to discover how much of its purport the girl had grasped, asked tentatively how she had enjoyed it.

'Oh, enormously!' was the heartfelt answer.

'Could you follow what the actors were saying?' pursued her mother in some dismay.

'Oh, I never bothered about *that*!' was the naïve reply; 'Just think of their beautiful attitudes and draperies!'

There is a little journal kept by Evelyn at the age of sixteen which throws light on her life at that date and how she was obsessed by the feeling that every moment wrested from the great aim of her existence was an irrevocable loss. Written in August, which was nominally holiday time, she was then more free to follow her own bent. She rose early, and from seven onwards painted or drew till the family breakfast at nine o'clock. ('*Breakfast, as usual, lasted a century!*' is one disconsolate entry.) As soon as she could escape, she went off to Grosvenor Square, where she worked for three hours in the morning, and sometimes, if she was fortunate in getting away, for four hours in the afternoon. In the evening, after dinner, she modelled, and all other available moments were filled up with reading. Yet the record of each day is a perpetual lamentation at the loss of time entailed by the petty routine of daily life, when, to her young enthusiasm, each hour was a treasure of which account must be rendered to the great god of Destiny. She chafed at the interminable family meals, the interruption of visitors, the evenings when guests to dinner prevented the daily modelling. Life, work and art were beckoning—'and,'

SCULPTURE

THE MATER DOLOROSA

EVELYN DE MORGAN FECIT

Exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1884.

"A piece of sculpture . . . remarkable for the uncommon beauty of its type and reticent character of its fine pathos."—*The Studio.*

[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

she writes, 'I have to sit in the drawing-room and listen to idiots talking about dressmakers and servants! This enforced idleness is insupportable.' Still more, her conscience was perpetually goading her with an imaginary laziness. 'Wasted a great deal of time,' she says self-accusingly on August 15, 1872, after five hours' steady work; and the next day she complains again: 'This is the third day when I have had only half a day's work.' On the 17th, after describing eight hours' work, she notes a heinous offence: 'At five, went out to tea. Changed my dress before going, which was unnecessary and wasted time.' The following day she writes:—

'*Saturday*, 18*th*.

'Half-past seven before I got to work. Worked for only an hour before breakfast. Worked three hours and a half in Grosvenor Square; after luncheon worked again an hour indifferently; was lazy and brought the work home pretending to myself I could not do more to it till it was dry which was merely a busy shape of idleness. Drew at home for an hour. Went to Madame Coulon's [the music mistress] and walked down Regent's Street, for what motive I cannot tell except wasting time. I hate Saturday! another week gone and I have done nothing, have worked even less than usual.'

Her description of Sunday, a day of enforced boredom, is not more happy:—

'Got up late; dawdled over dressing, went to Church; in the afternoon walked. Dawdled, dawdled, dawdled through a great deal of precious time.'

On her seventeenth birthday she wrote:—

'At work a little after 7; after breakfast worked again till 12 when we started on an expedition. It rained hard and was very dismal. Got back late . . . 17 to-day, that is to say 17 years wasted; three parts at least wasted in eating, dawdling and flittering [frittering] time away. I dread getting older, at the beginning of each year I say "I *will* do something" and at the end I have done nothing. Art is eternal, but life is short, and each minute idly spent will rise, swelled to whole months and years, and hound me in my grave. This year every imaginable obstacle has been put in my way, but slowly and tediously I am mastering them all. Now I *must* do something—I will work till I do something.

'Lost during the year 4 months through illness, 5 through being prevented in every possible way, 1 in flittering time away, add about 2 only in genuine work and that frequently diminished by inapplication!—I *will* make up for it now, I have not a moment to lose.'

At length leave was reluctantly given for her to attend the Slade Schools, where women had only recently been admitted, and she prepared to throw herself heart and soul into this new adventure. One thing she determined—if the future held any success for her this should be achieved on the merits of her work alone. She would start at the lowest rung of the ladder, she

would dress shabbily, and slave like any poor student whose bread depended on her labour, and the petty conventions which had hitherto hedged her about and hampered her should be for ever ignored.

The first check which her ardour received was the discovery that she was not to be allowed to walk alone either to or from Gower Street. It was unheard of, she was told, that a girl of her age and class should go about utterly unprotected. To an embryo Art-student this savoured too much of the young-ladyism from which she was determined to escape; but she still had to learn that convention was a myth which died hard. '*It is not done*' was, in her day, a verdict from which there was no appeal.

Trivial as was the point at issue, perhaps nothing serves to mark more completely the gulf which exists between past and present than the liberty which the girl of to-day enjoys when compared with that permitted to her predecessor in a former generation. It is only necessary to glance at the pages of *Punch* —that invaluable record of passing phases and follies—to re-create the social atmosphere of that time. For those were days when the single went nowhere unchaperoned by the married; when only a fast girl went alone in a hansom, or, worse still, drove in a hansom with the doors unclosed; and when the jest never palled of the incredible woman who wished to have a latch-key.

It must be borne in mind, moreover, that, only twenty years earlier, elderly spinsters without any adult male protector saw no absurdity in the fact that they had to keep some small page-boy to attend their walks abroad through quiet, respectable regions. No matter how minute and youthful this male escort might be, his guardianship was necessary to placate the proprieties. Nor could matrons be too venturesome. Mrs. Pickering used to relate how, as a woman of forty, tempted by the belief that she should meet her husband immediately, she had once rashly walked a few yards down Upper Grosvenor Street without a footman, and, in consequence—even in that irreproachable locality—had been promptly accosted by a gay rake who had perforce misunderstood her unprotected condition. Thus, in the seventies, it still scarcely provoked a smile, that a friend of hers, who was a septuagenarian and a great-aunt, never, for fear of being deemed unlady-like, ventured anywhere unattended by her old coachman—indeed the latter in slippery weather during the winter might be seen solemnly preceding his mistress to church, strewing sand upon the pavement upon which she was about to tread. '*It is not done*' still defined the correctitudes; and if you were indiscreet enough to defy what was 'not done,' you must be prepared to pay the penalty!

So Evelyn, to her indignation, was sent off to her classes in a carriage and pair. But she soon stopped the carriage and walked the rest of the way on foot. Next, a maid was engaged to accompany her—a woman of matronly proportions whose whole appearance exhaled respectability, and who received orders never to lose sight of her charge. The latter surveyed the portly frame of her proposed escort with secret satisfaction—a woman with that figure could be easily out-distanced!

Forthwith it was a usual sight to see Evelyn, her long hair flying in the wind, racing excitedly to her work, while far away, on the other side of the road, the stout maid Burgess toiled breathlessly in a vain endeavour to keep her in view. Two orders Evelyn promptly gave her so-called attendant—one was that the maid was never to be seen on the same side of the street as herself; the other was that, when calling to fetch her after the classes were over, the woman was to wait at some entrance indicated. Needless to say, the unfortunate Burgess often stayed wearily at the trysting-place only to discover that her charge had long since left the building by another doorway, and had thus successfully eluded the humiliation of being seen accompanied by a maid.

The story still lingers in the memory of Evelyn's fellow-students how, in her hurry to get to her work, she made her first appearance at the classes without a hat, blissfully unconscious that she had lost it *en route*. Daily she was in a fever to arrive the instant the doors were opened, and to make the very utmost of the opportunity which had been grudgingly granted to her. 'I can always picture her,' relates one of her fellow students, 'a slender, picturesque girl, with finely chiselled features and very lovely hair, dressed in some bright material and absorbed in her work. From the first she produced beautiful colours on her canvas, but if she attempted to match a ribbon for a dress, it was curious that she always bought the wrong shade and seemed unable to see this. She was full of mischief, told a story delightfully, and her laughter was irresistible; but where her painting was concerned she was all eagerness, seriousness and absorption.' Another friend of many years writes:

'Dear Evelyn! I wish I could say something that would evoke her charming image! She was such a gifted being with such a spiritual imagination. Yet all her great gifts and all her learning, all her profound thoughts and all her hard work, left her plenty of time for high spirits and fun! I think that of all the girls we knew she was the merriest: I can see and hear her laugh now as I think of her. She was a delightful being! so quick of sympathy, so warm-hearted, so kind!'

Among her contemporaries at this date under the tuition of the future President of the Royal Academy, Sir Edward Poynter, were many whose names afterwards became prominent in

literature and art. John Collier and his future wife Mary Huxley were her fellow students; Philip Norman; Mary Kingsley (Lucas Malet); 'Dolly' Tennant, afterwards Lady Stanley; and, by a strange coincidence, her friend Mary Stuart Wortley, who afterwards became the wife of Ralph, 2nd Earl of Lovelace, De Morgan's friend from the days of babyhood. Meanwhile imagination is also arrested by the thought that in this, Evelyn's first venture towards freedom, all unconscious of what the years held in store, she daily passed the house where her future husband had come into being; further, that she was working at a branch of the University where he, too, had dreamed his first dreams of struggle and achievement, and to the formation and promotion of which his father had devoted a lifetime.

To her disappointment, however, she soon discovered that little was to be learnt at the Slade Schools which she had not studied already. Her talent met with prompt recognition. 'She was considered the most brilliant pupil of her day,' states a contemporary. In 1873–4 she gained the first prize for painting from the Antique; and the next year, 1874–5, she gained the first prize for painting from the Life; that same year she likewise won the Slade Scholarship.

A story runs that, as she was leaving the building after the decision respecting this latter had been made known, a group of men-students were examining the list of competitors which had been posted near the entrance. All the names upon it were those of men with the exception of her own, ambiguous as to sex, which headed the list. 'Do you know this d——d fellow—this *Evelyn Pickering*? Who is he?' she heard them saying angrily as she passed unnoticed through their midst—devoured by her anxiety to dodge the maid who was lying in wait for her.

But Evelyn soon realized that it would be a waste of time to continue attending classes where she could make little further progress; and she longed to work on independent lines. So she threw up the Scholarship; and about this date one last effort was made by her parents to direct her in the way she should go.

Her mother, who was then ill and having a course of baths in Germany, wrote that, as she was unable to officiate herself, she had arranged for her daughter to be presented by a relation the following spring. 'I'll go to the Drawing Room if you like,' Evelyn wrote in reply; 'but if I go, I'll kick the Queen!' Perhaps it should be mentioned that this represented no personal animosity on her part to Queen Victoria, it was merely a protest against folly in the abstract. Nevertheless, it was felt that she might be capable of carrying out her threat, and the project was allowed to drop, though in the eyes of her family not to be pre-

sented was almost equivalent to what the omission of baptism would appear in the eyes of a good churchman. It was, however, further suggested to Evelyn that she might like to go into Society and see a little of the world, but she jumped to a conclusion respecting this process which was certainly unjustifiable in her case. 'No one shall drag me out with a halter round my neck to sell me!' was her uncompromising rejoinder.

Meanwhile she continued her work despite all obstacles. She had no studio, nor even a room with a light suitable for painting. The difficulty of introducing models into the house under such conditions was great; and she had little pocket money with which to pay them. As a result, pretty Jane, or any members of the household who could be bullied or cajoled into sitting for her were made use of, and as soon as the present writer had reached an age at which this was practicable, she, too, was pressed into the service. In this connexion, a personal reminiscence may not be too much in the nature of a digression.

Being but a small child, it was with difficulty that I could be persuaded to sit still in some uncomfortable attitude for what seemed to me a space of interminable torment. But only one bribe had influence with me. If my sister would tell me a story, I could forget for a time the pain of remaining motionless till this degenerated into physical torture. As already indicated, Evelyn was gifted with an imagination both vivid and gruesome. 'She delighted in making our flesh creep!' complained a companion of those early days; and the eerie tales which poured from her lips made such an impression on my childish fancy that often, after hearing one of them, for many nights I would wake screaming with terror, though resolute in my determination not to reveal the origin of the nightmare which obsessed me, lest in so doing I should deprive myself of any future repetition of the horrible pleasure which her stories gave me.

Of these tales I can still recall two. The first was as follows:—

A traveller journeying on foot through a strange country lost his way, and, overtaken by darkness, wandered on and on along an interminable road, till he was ready to succumb with exhaustion. The land through which he passed was indescribably solitary, no living creature came in sight, no human habitation appeared at which he could ask for shelter or for food; and the dim moonlight which, by and by, filtered from a stormy sky, revealed only the pale outline of the bare roadway stretching monotonously before him, bordered by dark forests and giant crags. The stillness oppressed him, and despair weighted his tired limbs till, verging on a state of collapse, he suddenly, to his delight, heard the sound of some vehicle approaching along the road behind him. Turning, by the aid of the moonlight he perceived a coach looming into sight, on the box of which,

silhouetted darkly against the pale horizon, were the forms of a driver and a footman.

The cumbersome vehicle lumbered heavily along till it reached the spot where he stood, when, in response to his gesticulations, it drew up; the footman got down stiffly from the box, and in silence held the door open for him to enter. Thankfully, the exhausted traveller clambered in, and as he groped his way to a seat, the door closed behind him noiselessly, and the coach rumbled on.

He now discovered that he was in the presence of several other passengers who sat rigidly upright in their respective seats and eyed him curiously, with piercing gaze. Loquacious in his gratitude, he addressed himself to the one opposite to him, and uttered effusive thanks for the courtesy which was being shown to him; but the man, who appeared to be clad in some heavy, old-fashioned overcoat, spoke never a word in reply, merely rolled his eyes, the balls of which glittered strangely in the moonlight. Surprised at such taciturnity, the traveller then addressed himself to the next passenger, but with the same result—the rigid figure made no response, only rolled its eyes in like manner, gazing at him fixedly. With a growing sense of discomfort, he turned and addressed some commonplace to another of his unsociable companions; but again he met with the same treatment. As the coach lumbered on, all the passengers sat motionless, each in his respective seat; all maintained unbroken silence; all eyed him with a gaze which seemed to pierce the gloom with sinister intent. And a growing fear crept over him, for the silence was as the silence of the grave; and the coach was like a hearse going to the churchyard; it smelt dank with the odour of Death itself; and its occupants, with their rigid forms and glittering eyes, were like no living men . . .

And suddenly there flashed across his unhappy remembrance a legend which he had heard, how, a hundred years before, a coach travelling along this same solitary road had, in the darkness, driven over a precipice so that all its occupants had perished; and how, on the anniversary of the disaster, it was whispered that a phantom coach, filled with the dead, re-enacted the tragedy which had then befallen. And woe betide the foolhardy man who unwittingly entered that fated vehicle, for he would share the doom of its once-living occupants. . . .

Then the traveller rose with a terrified cry and strove to open the door, but it would not yield to his efforts. He shouted for help but none answered; and, even as he tried to wrench asunder the rusty lock, already he saw before him in the moonlight the precipice at a bend of the road towards which the fated coach was inevitably approaching. Next the moon went behind a cloud, and as darkness fell, struggling more madly, he felt the

coach first tilt . . . then up-end so that the dead men fell forward smothering him. . . . For one moment it hung suspended above the abyss, then, with its freight of mouldering dead and shrieking living, it crashed downwards to its doom!

Here, it will be seen, were excellent ingredients for a nightmare; but it is impossible to convey in print how the story gained in the telling from the dramatic eloquence of the narrator. Night after night, an unhappy child, in my dreams I found myself seated in that phantom coach with the terribly rigid occupants rolling their white eyeballs. Then, with a sense of suffocation, I was struggling frantically to open a door that was firmly closed; and next would come the culminating horror of that crash down the abyss from which I awoke screaming for help, or shivering in speechless fright.

The other story was even more blood-curdling, yet the details are not so vivid in my recollection.

I recall that it told how, in a lonely house there lived a lonely child, whose life was a sad one. The only people she ever saw besides the few tradespeople who brought food to the house, were her father—a stern man, whom she feared; a nurse, who was even a greater terror to her; and her mother, who, she was told, was an incurable invalid; moreover, for hours together, and always at night, she was locked into her nursery. But once every evening the stern nurse came to fetch her, and she was taken to a distant room in the great house to say good night to the mother with whom she was never allowed to be alone. 'You must not stay long to tire your poor Mamma!' the nurse told her. 'Just kiss her, and curtsy and say Good night.' The mother sat always in a great chair with its back to the light, a still figure half shrouded in a mantilla, whose pale face she could see but dimly, and whose hand, when she pressed it to her lips, felt flabby and chill. At each visit the mother spoke little, save to ask the child if she had been good and obedient; and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, she expressed herself pleased in a strange, deep voice.

So the lonely years passed, till one night it befell that there was a fearful thunderstorm. The child in her nursery by herself crouched beneath the bed-clothes trembling with fright as the hail rattled against the window-panes and the lightning glittered through the room. At length came a louder clap than before, accompanied by a yet brighter flash, and springing from her bed in terror, she involuntarily fled to the door crying for help.

And lo! to her astonishment she found that, possibly rendered forgetful by the storm, the nurse had not turned the key in the lock as usual; it yielded to her efforts, and, frantic with

fear, she sped away down the passage, not knowing what she was about to do, but bent only on escaping from that lonely, tempest-haunted room.

Soon she saw a door whence a light gleamed; and running towards it, she next paused abruptly and crouched in the shadow, for she heard within her father and the nurse were talking. 'Do you think that she suspects?' she heard her father ask; and the nurse answered in sinister tones—'*She is growing older!*' Then the father thought for a space, and said slowly—'We must do to her as was done to her mother!' and the nurse laughed in a fashion which made the blood run cold in the veins of the listening child. Fearing she scarcely knew what, yet more terrified than she had ever been at the storm, she fled away along the dark corridor, the desperate determination growing in her heart to seek the protection of that mother of whom she knew so little, and to learn from the invalid's own lips what was this mystery which seemed to enfold them both.

Swiftly she traversed the long passages and silent rooms, the lightning playing upon the walls, till at length she reached the well-known door to which she had so often been brought. She knocked timidly, but received no answer; so, hesitatingly, she entered. Again the lightning flashed, and she saw that her invalid mother was not—as might have been expected—in bed. She sat, a still figure, in the same chair in which the child had always seen her, the dark mantilla, as usual, half shrouding her pallid face and motionless form.

Nervously the child called to her, but received no answer; and with a nameless suspicion waxing in her mind, the unbidden visitor groped her way across the room. For a space all was still; next came a louder crash of thunder, and the girl, terror-stricken, involuntarily reached out her hand for protection and clutched the arm of the apathetic figure by whose side she now stood. Then . . . slowly . . . she felt the figure heave forward. It toppled over—sliding with a dull thud on to the floor; and, as the lightning came again, she gazed in horror upon the huddled form at her feet, from the limp head of which the mantilla had fallen back, revealing an ashen, lifeless face. Her mother was dead—*and stuffed*!

The mystery was solved. Her father and the nurse had murdered the mother, and, for fear of the tradespeople who visited the house, had had her stuffed, and kept up the fiction that she still lived, an incurable invalid. The nurse was a ventriloquist, hence the imaginary conversations which had apparently proceeded from the dead woman!!

As to what followed, I have no recollection; always my memory stays at that grim moment when the stuffed mother fell limply to the floor, and the petrified child stood alone in the

silent room listening in terror lest she should hear the approaching footsteps of her would-be murderers!

Thus, with her attention centred on her painting, Evelyn could give rein to a power of invention wholly detached from the subject at which she was working. While she told these stories, filling me with a horror which has survived for a lifetime, lovely things were flowing from her brush, and her brain was grappling with problems of technique or busy with the portrayal of ideals. Her work soon attracted public attention from its richness of colouring, its fine brushwork, and the power which, in spite of immaturity, it displayed. The critics united in praise of it; and no sooner were her pictures seen than they were sold. This latter fact opened out a vista of new possibilities to her, for money meant freedom, and freedom meant greater power to work. She slaved with tireless energy till, with increasing success, she determined to go out to study in Rome.

The suggestion naturally met with opposition. In days when to walk to Gower Street unprotected was viewed askance, for a handsome girl, not yet twenty, to travel out to Italy alone and friendless was not likely to meet with encouragement. Wherefore more lay in her decision than at first appears. For it represented a yet more crucial severance from the old traditions; and she was aware what her choice entailed. On the one hand there still lay open to her the usual life of a girl of her age—a life of ease and amusement, to be enjoyed with the warm approval of her elders. On the other she could only see a vista of hardship, of actual poverty—since under the circumstances no funds would be provided for her maintenance—and the sense that she was looked upon by her relations much in the light of a pariah. To strong natures, opposition is bracing; the mere fact of having to do battle strengthens endeavour; yet to Evelyn, though it did not shake her determination, there is no doubt that the lack of sympathy hurt like a wound.

Nevertheless, to Rome she went with no funds save the precarious means she could earn, and a dress allowance kept purposely scanty. Alone in lodgings she studied, or paced the ancient city lost in dreams of an impersonal Past and a personal Future. She dwelt, absorbed, on the glories of the Renaissance; she drank in the poetry, the pageantry, the haunting antiquity of her surroundings. The beauty of Italy satisfied her soul-hunger; the love of it was to leave her only with life itself.

To this period of her career must be assigned various pictures of which it is not possible here to give any detailed description, but in which the classical severity of her earlier manner first blended with the mellow beauty of Italian Art. About this date she also modelled a fine head of Medusa which she had cast in

bronze in Rome, but which she did not exhibit till 1882, at the Grosvenor Gallery. It is a work of great power, which it is difficult to conceive was executed by so young a girl. 'It is as largely handled as it is strong and noble in conception,' pronounced *The Studio*. The massive head is majestic in its pose; its gaze is full of a brooding melancholy. The snaky locks entwined above its brow are full of a nauseating lissomness, while to add to the realism, one reptile has become detached and lies, apparently writhing, at the base of the neck. The whole conveys a sense of evil, of strength, of relentless force—yet mingled with a tragedy so profound that it provokes a horror which is akin to pity.

Meanwhile Evelyn lived poorly and worked hard. Friends arose whose friendship was to be lifelong; and who, by and by, when she lay stricken with Roman fever, tended her with care. For a time she battled for life; and although she at last recovered, she remained weak and subject to recurring fits of malaria, in connexion with which, either at this or a later date, one of her friends, Miss Mabel Robinson, relates as follows:—

'One March day my sister and I chanced to meet Evelyn in the Boboli Gardens. We were about to spend a few days at Assisi, and when we told her, she said how she envied us. The natural rejoinder was "Come with us!" and she came; and we had the happiest, jolliest time together.

'At Perugia, however, the first hotel we went to looked such a cut-throat place that we were all afraid. We did not want to stay, yet could think of no excuse for immediate departure. In this dilemma, Evelyn at once rose to the occasion. She sent for the *padrone*, and asked solemnly if there was a chambermaid in the place who could dress her hair in the morning? Of course there was not; and Evelyn thereupon, with becoming dignity, announced her regret at not being able to face such an insuperable difficulty; after which we hurried off, without let or hindrance, and shaking inwardly with laughter, to a safe, proper hotel "under English Management."

'The next day we drove from Perugia to Assisi, and our entry there at sunset, with the Angelus ringing and the air fragrant with incense, is among the most beautiful memories of my life. But it cost Evelyn a relapse into the malaria which had tormented her all the winter, and she was so ill that we sent for the local doctor, whose official position was Doctor to the Railway between Assisi and Empoli.

'When he came, he proved to be an old, old gentleman, with white hair falling on to his shoulders, a peasant's cape, and a long staff. He gave her quinine, of course, but further recommended a local treatment of cabbage nets wrung out of boiling water to be laid over the feet and ankles, she meanwhile being

BRONZE BUST OF MEDUSA
EVELYN DE MORGAN FECIT
Height 31 inches
[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

snug in bed. So soon as the nets cooled, they were to be replaced by others—" Seven, or else nine times," he pronounced impressively; " Odd numbers, remember. One must never have recourse to even numbers or it has no effect ! " How Evelyn laughed ! but she was well the next day and able to enjoy to the full the beauty of Assisi. After that trip we were always friends.'

Soon after Evelyn's return from her first visit to Italy her family moved from the house in Upper Grosvenor Street in which they had lived for so many years, to a large corner house in Bryanston Square, No. 48. About eighteen months later her father died suddenly from a heart attack; and subsequently her mother during a great part of each year lived in Yorkshire near her old home. For a time Evelyn used the large ball-room in the deserted London house for her painting; but ere long she left home finally, to live in rooms adjacent to a studio and devote herself more completely to her work.

At this juncture, in May, 1877, what was regarded as an epoch-making event in certain artistic circles occurred in the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery. In order to understand the need which this annual Exhibition was designed to supply, it is necessary to revert to the conditions then prevailing in the world of Art.

Thirty years previously, in 1848, the association of three lads —Holman Hunt, aged twenty-one, Rossetti twenty, and Millais nineteen—had resulted in an unprecedented and far-reaching movement. These young artists, strongly influenced by the originality and thought of Ford Madox-Brown, broke away from the stereotyped ideas which had previously prevailed, and inaugurated a crusade to infuse new life and light into the hide-bound conventions of their day.

Imbued with the grace and charm of the early Italian and Flemish masters, they recognized the profound and loving care with which even the primitive among those painters had bestowed upon their Art, and how, while striving after a high ideal, they adhered to a loyal presentment of fact. The beauty and the sincerity, the fantasy and yet the faithfulness of those long-dead workers sank deep into the hearts of the young crusaders, and fired them with the spirit of emulation. Space will not here permit any adequate analysis of their dreams, nor of the motives which conduced to the nomenclature which they adopted when electing to call themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It suffices that the root and aim of their endeavour was a great sincerity, and to do the very utmost which was in them. To sum up their creed in their own boyish language, they determined to paint the best possible pictures in the best possible way; and although, obviously, opinions might differ as to the meaning of

the word 'best,' their purpose was far removed from that of the decadents, whose aim has since been to paint the worst possible pictures in the worst possible way, and thus to achieve a cheap notoriety by startling humanity.

As to the need for some drastic upheaval in accepted conventions at this particular epoch, the student alike of Art and History may recognize its urgency. It is true that the long-dead are apt to become deified in the thoughts of a remote posterity; equally true is it that the tendency of every age is to despise the generation which directly preceded it and to view a divergence from the conclusions of its immediate forefathers as a sign of progress and development. None the less, at the date when the young Pre-Raphaelites disturbed the self-complacency of their contemporaries, Art had undoubtedly sunk to a level of banality which needed some powerful incentive to instil into it fresh life. The belief prevailed that it could only be learnt by rote and that accepted methods should not be departed from, while independence of thought was throughout hampered by an artificiality which was death to inspiration.

Like all the exponents of a novel creed the crusaders were first hailed as prophets, then pilloried by a fickle public. Directly it was recognized that these men, impudent by reason of their very youth, were bent on breaking away from accepted standards, that they dared to think and act in defiance of established rules, public and press alike united to decry them. Only the championship of Ruskin later stemmed the torrent of contumely.

As the years passed, however, the somewhat awkward term which they had coined to express a mere youthful *camaraderie* and unanimity of aim, gradually acquired a second meaning apart from that originally intended by them. 'The public,' relates Percy Bate, 'who came to associate the term with the later work of Rossetti applied it to his pictures and to those of Burne-Jones, ignoring the earlier meaning of the word, and using it to denote the eclectic and poetic school of which these painters were the founders, and of which their work is the highest achievement. With this double sense this word exists, and with this twofold meaning it may be accepted, inasmuch as the later tradition was derived from the more mature development in the style of these two artists who were originally Pre-Raphaelites in the strictest sense.'

In accordance with this interpretation, therefore, Evelyn was classified as one of a sect who sought 'to express the qualities of truth and directness, of honesty and definite inspiration which they discerned in the work of the early Italian Masters'—a School the aim of which can be summed up adequately in that word 'sincerity.' With all the poetry and the imagery of a high

endeavour its exponents believed in a faithful adherence to accuracy of fact and detail, in an infinite capacity for taking pains. As there is said to be no royal road to learning, so, to them, there were no claptrap methods of achieving a cheap notoriety. Each gave of the utmost which was in him—the aspiration of his spirit, the labour of his hands—to the ideal to which he was dedicated. There is an allegory that aptly illustrates the attitude of those ardent young spirits who inaugurated this new movement and their disciples. A young painter continued year after year creating pictures with a wonderful red glow which none could rival, and the world marvelled at his secret. But still his pictures grew more beautiful, his colours glowed with more radiant hues, while he himself waxed more white and frail. At length one day, before a masterpiece, he lay white and silent for ever, for the blight of Death had stilled the active hand and the exquisite brain. And the world continued marvelling—'Where did he find his colour from?'—but none recognized that he had painted with his life-blood.

* * * * *

And all this discussion about the new School of Art—new and yet so old—had been seething in the world for thirty years while the Academy had shown little encouragement to a movement, some of the leaders of which, and their followers, determined to ignore the Academy. Thus it was that certain prominent painters of the age remained voluntarily and resolutely outside the walls of an Institution which they held was not representative of the Zeitgeist, and the decisions of which, they affirmed, did not show that fine impartiality to which it should have been pledged. It was under these conditions that Sir Coutts Lindsey determined to start a Gallery on more liberal lines, one which should not be hampered by worn-out traditions, but should give scope to original merit of conception and execution, and to the untrammelled expression of individual aims. Moreover, to this Gallery artists were to send by invitation only, which at once avoided certain obvious evils attendant upon selection by a Committee, and put each exhibitor on his mettle to give of his very best.

This new experiment in the World of Art was awaited with great interest. But while all viewed it with roused curiosity, some looked forward to it with enthusiastic expectations and some were prepared to mock at the vagaries of the new Sect for whose exploitation it was presumably designed, and who, since all great movements have their attendant freaks, were satirized in the person of—

> 'A Greenery-yallery, Grosvenor-Gallery
> Foot-in-the-grave young man.'

Evelyn, then aged twenty-one, was invited to contribute to the first Exhibition, and to it she sent a picture of *Ariadne in Naxos*, a work which, despite its immaturity, is remarkable in its power of suggestion and supreme grace. Ariadne is depicted as having sunk upon the seashore with bowed head and drooping figure, while one hand resting upon the sand supports her, the other lies listlessly in her lap. Her back is turned to the ocean, which her gaze must first have swept with despairing anguish for any trace of her belovêd; and against the waste of lonely water and solitary shore, her pitiful figure is defined in its slender loveliness. Her robe of rich russet red and the subdued green of the cloak which has fallen from her shoulders contrast with the soft fairness of her skin; while the shining glory of her hair, falling from a narrow fillet, shrouds her like a cloud, and forms a golden background to the pale beauty of her face. The conception is arresting, not only in its depth of colouring and delicacy of workmanship, but in its extreme simplicity. Here is no straining after effect, no attempt at a *tour de force* which the painter was too young to achieve; but all the tenderness of a great love, all the desolation of a broken heart are expressed in the pathetic grace of that bowed figure, crushed beneath its intensity of grief.

This picture was purchased at the Private View by the Right Hon. John Mundella; and many years later Mr. Shaw-Sparrow wrote of it as follows:—

'The maiden name of Mrs. William De Morgan was Evelyn Pickering, and twenty-three years have passed since that name appeared for the first time in the catalogue of an important exhibition of pictures. A painting in oil was hung then at the Grosvenor Gallery; it had for its subject *Ariadne in Naxos*; it was close in drawing, thoughtful and precise in composition; and its style, its general character, was Pre-Raphaelite, but not as yet in what may be called a Victorian manner. Its painter, that is to say, was not, in 1877, a devoted follower of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Miss Pickering indeed had in those days barely scraped acquaintance with the most noted men of genius who had been influenced by the modern Pre-Raphaelite movement. She had not seen the pictures that Millais painted in his first period, nor had she a chance of becoming familiar with them till they were brought once more to public notice by the Millais Exhibition of 1886. With Rossetti's poetry, in 1877, Miss Pickering was well acquainted, but of his genius in painting she knew scarcely anything at all, and it remained almost unknown to her till she visited that fine show of Rossetti's pictures which was held after his death. As regards Burne-Jones she had certainly seen a few of his paintings, and had certainly been moved by their peculiar greatness; but the influence of Burne-Jones had not then appeared in her work. . . . The short of the matter is that Miss Pickering's style had come to her at first-hand, a natural expression of her spiritual nature. She understood the great predecessors of Raphael; she and they were congenial, "across the great gulf of time they exchanged smiles and a salute." Even as a child she made friends with those who were represented in the National Gallery; it was from their pictures that her inborn love of Art received

its earliest encouragement. Other æsthetic influences came soon afterwards, the first of these being the wise sympathy and the rich, suggestive art of her uncle, Mr. Roddam Spencer-Stanhope.'

The phrase here employed, 'a natural expression of her spiritual nature,' is singularly apt when applied to the work criticized. It is in the character of a truism to emphasize that there are three standpoints from which a picture may be regarded: one, in relation to its individual interpretation of Nature; one, in its grasp of technique; one, in its reflection of the mentality of the painter—its exposition of some truth or purpose which the artist was striving to express. But while any just estimate of achievement must obviously appraise each of these points, it is from the last that—to many—the pictures of Evelyn make their strong appeal. For they are the work of a scholar, a thinker, an idealist; and it is the mind revealed in the picture which calls to minds atune.

As to the especial influence upon her work represented by her close association with her uncle, Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, it is difficult to take the exact measure. In their aim and their vision, as, too, in their passionate love of beautiful colouring, there was a complete harmony between the older and the younger artist; still more did Evelyn owe an inestimable debt to the sympathy and encouragement of her uncle. Yet their work, to the last, remained distinct and individual; while later, when Evelyn had achieved a mastery of technique in which Spencer-Stanhope failed, with unhesitating generosity he acknowledged the fact: 'You can draw infinitely better than I do,' he said, 'I can only envy you!' So, too, in regard to the other influence of which the reviewer speaks—her friendship with Burne-Jones—only a superficial inspection can link such dissimilar work; for the art of Burne-Jones, with its calm, passionless beauty, is more Byzantine in character, while that of Evelyn never wavered from her early allegiance to the glowing and more animated Italian School of the Renaissance. Moreover, this was subsequently accentuated by her closer connexion with Tuscany which she had early loved. From 1880 Spencer-Stanhope made his permanent home on the Apennine Hills, having discovered that there only could he procure some immunity from the asthma which all his life had hunted him from place to place. Thus a second home at Villa Nuti, Bellosquardo, and an annual visit to Florence, resulted for Evelyn; and in that old grey palace of the Strozzi Princes she subsequently visualized some of her fairest inspirations, looking out through a vista of roses and olives, afar to a panorama of blue mountains, and down to the lovely Val d'Arno where, drowsing in the sunlight, lay Florence, the city of bells.

To the Grosvenor Gallery during the years which followed she

sent annually—there are over twenty-five exhibits recorded to her name on the lists; and at its cessation, she transferred her work to the New Gallery. It was perhaps inevitable that the former Institution should become viewed somewhat in the light of a rival to the Academy, and that those who had once enlisted in the ranks of its contributors should feel it a point of honour to remain loyal adherents to the object with which it had been inaugurated. To the Academy neither Evelyn nor Spencer-Stanhope, of set purpose, ever offered a single exhibit; while Burne-Jones, the tardy recognition of whose genius by the body of Academicians resulted in their request that he would accept the honour of Membership, experienced genuine qualms of conscience in acceding to their offer.

Meanwhile Evelyn sent to Exhibitions at Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Berlin, and others. Some of her pictures were sold by the Fine Art Society, some were painted on commission, some were purchased by public Galleries, many went to America. In the Russell-Cotes Gallery in Bournemouth is a picture *Aurora Triumphans* which she painted at the age of twenty-two, and on which her initials E. P. were, by a forgery, changed to E. B. J., so that for twenty years it was believed to be the work of Edward Burne-Jones. The Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool purchased another large canvas entitled *Life and Thought emerging from the Tomb*. Mr. Imrie, an Art Collector of the same city, ordered successively from her eight pictures, and distracted her much by announcing his desire for 'a single figure—preferably in white!'—instructions which the young artist did not attempt to carry out.[1]

'She made her name,' relates Miss Morris, 'as an artist of distinction. Her pictures have an epic quality and are spacious in conception, while [in her later work] showing an almost exaggerated insistence on decorative detail. They are remarkable for the beauty of drapery design, for drawing vigorous and delicate and for sumptuous colour, for great enjoyment of textures. She had astonishing physical endurance and power of work, starting to paint early in the morning and going on swiftly and surely throughout the day. The output in consequence was very great.'

Among her early pictures she painted one, now in Africa, which she called *The Thorny Way*. It depicts a Princess standing on the steps of a Palace, clad in a lovely robe of gold, richly

[1] These pictures were *Flora, the Goddess of Blossoms and Flowers*, exhibited at Glasgow and at Wolverhampton; *Gloria in Excelsis* (in which the Angel's wings were painted from the wings of humming-birds); *The City of Light*; *The Crown of Glory*; *A Dryad*; *Helen of Troy* and *Cassandra* (both now in the possession of the author); and others untraced, including later purchases by Mr. Imrie.

AURORA TRIUMPHANS

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT CIRCA 1877–8

Now in the Russell-Cotes Gallery at Bournemouth.

Reproduced by the kind permission of the owner, Mr. Herbert Russell-Cotes.

Aurora is represented by the beautiful nude figure on the right awaking from the bondage of Night, typified by the released cords and flowers. Night, a dark-haired, sombrely-draped figure, is passing away before the rosy clouds of dawn. At the back stand three Angels with scarlet wings and rich tunics of golden feathers, blowing a triumphant blast on their golden trumpets.

adorned with jewels. Behind her, through an archway, one sees a vista of the lovely flower-bedecked country she is leaving; before her lies the path at which she is gazing, beset with cruel, giant briars on which she is about to tread with bare feet—

> 'Briars like bitter words and thorns like malice,
> Great twining creepers like an iron thong——'

Mrs. Fleming, *née* Kipling, seeing this picture, wrote some hasty verses on it as she had done on the picture by De Morgan, one version of which ran as follows:—

THE THORNY WAY.

She left the palace of the King, her father;
She left the music, and she left the throng;
She left the thornless flowers, hers to gather
At her own will—without a thought of wrong;
At the great bidding of another Father,
The King of Kings—whose mandate is so strong—
She turned from pleasure—unto suffering rather—
And set her feet the thorny path along.
The path had thorns to pierce and briars to sting her;
Snakes that were hidden—savage beasts a-stir—
And yet she knew it was the way to bring her
Into the Path of Peace prepared for her,
Where after wounds and anguish bravely borne,
There shone a Glory from a Crown of Thorn.

Did she, one wonders, trace a connexion between the pursuit of an Ideal by the girl in the picture and that of the girl who had painted the picture? Be that as it may, of the work which the young artist accomplished, Sir William Richmond pronounced, later in life, 'Her industry was astonishing, and the amount which she achieved was surprising, especially considering the infinite care with which she studied each detail in her determination to bring it to the highest point of perfection. I do not think she ever painted a picture on which she did not invite my criticism, and I always found her work remarkable.' George Frederick Watts gave a more emphatic verdict. 'She is a long way ahead of all the women,' he stated on one occasion, 'and considerably ahead of most of the men. I look upon her as the first woman-artist of the day—if not of all time.'

So the years passed—years of loneliness and work, of hardship and poverty—but years, too, of happy aspiration and achievement; till, by and by, in the ever-widening circle of the friends whom they shared in common, she and De Morgan drifted together, and found in each other the affinity for which each had been waiting.

The story runs that it was at a fancy-dress ball given by

Mrs. Walter Bagehot that they first met, and laughed together about art, life and the eccentricities of humanity. Evelyn, in rose-colour, wrote herself down as 'A tube of rose-madder'; De Morgan, asked to name his costume, described it as 'madder still.' The new acquaintance was clinched in typical fashion. Perturbed at the perversity of a glove which refused to be buttoned, he at length turned despairingly to his partner: 'If you will button my glove for me,' he pleaded, 'I will give you one of my pots.' The bargain was struck, the glove was buttoned, the pot accepted, and the comradeship cemented for all time.

The manner in which news of the engagement was communicated to Evelyn's family was equally characteristic. It must first be explained that she had made a practice of dining with her mother in Bryanston Square every Sunday, often bringing with her some friend. Only a short time previously she had alarmed her family by the announcement that the following week she intended to bring to dinner a severe elderly female of the most forbidding and cantankerous type, and when the day came, in walked the antithesis of what had been expected—a lovely girl of sixteen who made merry at the dismay which her advent had occasioned—Margaret Burne-Jones. When, therefore, a letter from Evelyn arrived abruptly announcing that she was engaged to be married, and was intending to bring her fiancé to dinner on the following Sunday, in view of her known predilection for a practical joke, the intelligence was received with the incredulity it seemed to court. Here, obviously, was another jest—this time too far-fetched for credence!—Evelyn, whose sole romance was her art—Evelyn to have fallen in love, to be engaged—to be about to be married like any ordinary mortal—the absurdity of the suggestion was manifest. So an answer was dispatched conveying this shrewd interpretation, and elicited a somewhat despairing protest from the recipient—'But I *am* serious; I will bring the man to dinner on Sunday!' Only then did a slight misgiving cross her mother's mind. 'You don't think there can be any truth in it?' she questioned hesitatingly, and the supposition was received with derision. 'Evelyn would never *look* at any man,' pronounced one of her brothers complacently—'unless it was a picturesque Italian organ-grinder!'

But when the dinner hour arrived the following Sunday, with it arrived a man who, despite the embarrassment consequent upon the novelty of his position, had an attractive manner and greeted the family as his own. Inquiries subsequently elicited that he was known to Spencer-Stanhope, who affirmed that he had heard 'nothing but good of De Morgan'; and all went merry as a marriage bell, save that, owing to the infatuation for manufacturing pottery displayed by the prospective bridegroom,

his income was precarious, and the engagement was likely to prove a lengthy one. 'We are only engaged,' Evelyn wrote to her uncle, 'we should not dream of getting married for at least fifteen years!' 'All the better,' he rejoined; 'there will be less time to quarrel in!' De Morgan, too, when questioned respecting the date of the wedding, replied contentedly, 'I don't see where the hurry is—why, I waited over eighteen years for Evelyn to be born!' Most people received the news with incredulity. 'Evelyn and William De Morgan were such gifted and uncommon creatures,' writes Miss Robinson, 'and though—as it turned out—so suited to make one another happy, they were superficially so un-alike. I was very much surprised when she told me of their engagement—she was such a bright, harum-scarum thing and he then seemed to me such an old bachelor!' Some of De Morgan's friends, moreover, took him to task facetiously about his projected change of state:—

'It is very inconvenient and inconsiderate of you—really' [runs one of these letters], 'as it puts me in a regular fix. I have always been in the habit latterly of sending my friends a De Morgan pot as a wedding-present—I hardly know what else to choose. I suppose you would not care for one, would you? they really are very beautiful things, and not too common yet. If you would, I shall be happy to help you to choose one!'

Meanwhile in the ball-room of the house which De Morgan rented in Great Marlborough Street the engaged couple started a joint exhibition of their pottery and pictures. There, on Sunday afternoons, they met, and jointly entertained their friends, dispensing tea in rose-coloured De Morgan cups which, lovely in themselves, made the beverage they contained look like dirty soup. It was not till three years later that the wedding took place. To her mother, who was then in Italy staying with the Spencer-Stanhopes, Evelyn wrote, 'I should hate to have a fuss; may we have a run-away wedding?' and the answer was sympathetic—'By all means, but the only difficulty I see is there is no one to run away from!'

Nevertheless, when the wedding took place, it was not without an element of adventure. Few friends attended the quiet ceremony, on a bleak March day in 1887, when the bride's red dress and hat formed a refreshing note of colour in the prevailing gloom of a yellow fog. No plans had been made for the honeymoon, and the couple characteristically drove to the nearest station to see what trains chanced to be in at the moment of their arrival. The somewhat tame result of this novel proceeding was that they found themselves *en route* for the Isle of Wight. Thence De Morgan wrote to Burne-Jones to announce the fact of his marriage, and also that he and his wife had bought a house in the Vale, Chelsea, where they expected to take up their abode immediately on their return.

William De Morgan to Edward Burne-Jones.

'BLACK GANG CHINE,
'ISLE OF WIGHT,
'*March* 6, '87.

'DEAR OLD NED,—

'I must just send you a line to spare you the shock of seeing the Noose in the Noosepaper. I have busted and bloomed and blossomed into a married man, after having been single, man and boy, for more than forty years. I hope it will turn out well. When I have misgivings, I console myself with the rare old adage, *Vixere nupti ante Agamemnona.* If my recollection serves me right though, Agamemnon didn't come off so well as *I* deserve to—as for him, no doubt it was all right, for he was no better than the heathen. Now *I*'m a ratepayer!

'Me and Mrs.

Demorgannéepickering (it wants a whole line) are going to reside in a Wale, where indeed Mrs. Mould told Mrs. Gamp we all reside—but this is an *Imperium in Imperio*—a subwale—just oppersite Paulton Square, where they murdered an 'ousekeeper and shoved her in a box and buried her in the back garden—this is considered in the rent. By the way, we don't pay any, having bought the lease, and perhaps if they'd done this in the case of the Wale of the Temple there wd have been no rent.

'Anyhow the Wale is there. We don't know our number. The postman he says one number, Mr. Whistler's French bonne opposite she says another—the rate-collector he says another. *Quot homines, tot sententiae!*—however, I will speak no more French. Besides a new studio calls the passer-by's attention to the Mansion. He cannot pass by neither, because he can't, as you'll see when you come. If he depends on passing by, he'll have to come on the parish—I'm sorry.

'Now to the point. Robbed of all linguistic decoration, all flowers of language, and figures of speech (my wife is agitating me by remarks) it is that I am and always shall be

'Your affectionate friends,
'WM. DE MORGAN.
'EVELYN DE MORGAN.

'She began it with a P.I.'

Edward Burne-Jones to William De Morgan.

Undated.

'MY DEAR D.M.,—

'We all live in a WALE.

'Me as well as you does.

I have been ill. I have been uncommon ill, and can't go out, I can't; so I can't come to you, not brobly for days to come I can't. . . .

'Did you expect an answer to your letter, dear fellow? Have you known me these forty years and still expect answers to letters?

'I should like to see that house—yes, I should. But I have been ill. I have had a bad illness—I was in danger of swearing very often—it was a cold—nothing is worse than a cold except 2 colds, I have had 2 colds—I am much weakened. I have not been happy. I hate being unwell. I hate the least discomfort. I like things to go happily, prosperously and smoothly—that's what I mean by Ethics, and I mean the same thing by political economy, and my aspirations in socialism are all founded on my being well and prosperous and happy.

'I am your affect. friend,
'E. BURNE-JONES.'

WILLIAM AND EVELYN DE MORGAN

CHAPTER IX

THE FULHAM PERIOD

1887–1908

THE Vale, where the De Morgans took up their abode, was a unique little bit of old Chelsea, now, alas! demolished to make way for what to a modern builder seems, if not a new Heaven, at least a desirable and very new Earth.

Formerly, as one walked along the noisy and unappetizing King's Road, nearly opposite Paulton Square, one came to a small crossing guarded by an unpretentious wooden gate, curiously rural in appearance and suggestive of being the entrance to some derelict country field. The chances were against the casual passer-by even noticing its existence; but those who had occasion to penetrate to the precincts beyond it found themselves in a roadway resembling a country lane which, in the sudden hush that fell, seemed a veritable oasis from the turmoil of the noisy thoroughfare they had left. This little retreat was a *cul de sac* down which no vehicles drove and no foot-passengers passed save only those who sought one of the three isolated houses that nestled there, each in the midst of a spacious garden. It terminated in green sward and waving trees, the remains of an ancient deer-park; and the quiet was broken only in true rural fashion by the song of birds or the droning of the far-away traffic so mellowed by distance that it enhanced the prevailing sense of peace.

The quaint, rambling dwelling taken by the De Morgans stood on the left of the lane, shrouded in creepers, with a veranda back and front. A greenhouse overlooked the garden, where flourished an ancient vine and a figtree, though some of the fine old mulberry trees, which seemed survivals from a former orchard, had to be cut down to make way for a studio which Evelyn built. On one side of the house stretched the former deer-park, and opposite to it was the lovely spot where Whistler grew his larkspurs round a velvet lawn and Alfred Austin was inspired to pen 'Farewell summers from a garden that I love.'

Long years afterwards, when writing his last novel, De Morgan depicted this house in the Vale, disguised under the original

name of Kelmscott House, 'The Retreat'; and, imagining it as it must surely have been at an earlier age of its existence when it was a genuine country house amid country surroundings, he made it the home of the *Old Man's Youth*, a vision of a happy past to the hero, Eustace John, then dying in Chelsea Infirmary.

'In those days,' he relates, resuscitating in the story the actual conditions of his own boyhood, 'you could walk from Putney to Chelsea through fields all the way by keeping off the road a little. . . . I can recall now what the hay smelt like' . . . and 'The Retreat' he imagines thus: 'The lane was lined with trees on either side, elm and chestnut, and was entered by a swing-gate, down a private carriage way shared by two or three residences at the end. The gravel pathway made a circle between them, round some older elms, to make a turning for things on wheels. At the end on the left, unseen at first, was a garden' . . . and again he dwells reminiscently on the all-pervading scent of hay which filled the air in that far-away summer, of the intoxicating masses of sweet peas and roses to be seen on the smooth lawn before the trim house—even around the old figtree he weaves a tender romance—while he shows the vista of a real meadow beyond the fence, with a real deer park where—actually! —fallow-deer were then browsing on land which formed part of some private estate with grand old timber.

'"I'll show you the house"—[he represents the fictitious tenant saying to Eustace John] . . . "my wife is dead now, and I have to go. We lived here fifty years. The house was new when we came. Come through into the garden and see the figtree I planted. Fifty years ago!"

'We followed him straight through the house and a greenhouse into the garden. It was a lovely garden, and stretched away to the high hedge with a road beyond, and haycarts at a standstill at a roadside pothouse. I saw a carter's head and hands and a quart pot above the mountain of hay that hid his residuum. He had been too lazy to get down for his drink.

'"It isn't what it was," said the old man. "It was open country then. All built up now—all built up!" He looked towards the backs of new houses that were asserting themselves crudely along the King's Road. . . .'

And then that graphic sun-lit vision of a bygone Chelsea fades; and the writer describes with mingled pathos and humour how Eustace John returns as an old man to gaze at the transformed 'Retreat,' then inhabited by De Morgan and his wife.

'The last time I saw the place . . . our house was no longer there, but traces of it appeared in the structure of two smaller houses, on its site, one of them inhabited by artists, who had built a studio on *our* garden. Where have they not done so, and who wants the work they do in them? Nemesis had come upon these, for a giant factory has sprung up and overwhelmed them and their studio. . . .'

LOVE'S PASSING

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

"Two lovers, seated in the twilight, hear the flutter of Love's wings, and the music of his piping. In the far distance, on the other side of the River of Life, are two figures approaching, Death and Eld. The man is absorbed in the music, but the woman hears the footsteps coming. (*Explanation by Evelyn De Morgan.*)

[*In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.*

But though a network of sordid streets and the blank wall of a factory had indeed blotted out all trace of the lovely rural scene pictured by De Morgan, at the date when he went to live there, the houses in the Vale, with their peppercorn rental, still bravely defied the extinction that had overwhelmed their former surroundings. Full of unexpected nooks and irregularities, spruce with gay Morris papers, and decorated with De Morgan pots and rich-hued paintings, the home to which the bride and bridegroom then returned had no trace of the desolation which afterwards overtook it, and seemed a fitting haven of peace for two lovers of the Beautiful.

Above an archway looking out on to the garden Evelyn hung a picture that she had recently painted and which she always refused to sell, entitled *Love's Passing*. In tone and conception it is reminiscent of an earlier work by her that had attracted considerable notice, *By the Waters of Babylon*,[1] and the note of sadness which permeates the poetry of its inspiration endows it with a subtle charm. Two lovers seated in the twilight are listening to Love's piping—a radiant Love with rose-hued wings and robe which contrast with the paler glory of the sunset sky and the rising moon whose beams fall upon the silver river behind him. And the man, seated upon the beflowered bank, is listening enraptured to the strains of Love's music, but the woman, in whose face is a dreamy wistfulness, is holding up a hand as though bidding him hearken to another sound which she alone hears—the footsteps of Old Age and Death who are approaching inevitably on the other side of the River of Life. The picture was illustrative of the verses in Tibullus, which were translated thus:—

> 'List we to Love meanwhile in lovers' fashion;
> Death nears apace, with darkness round his brows;
> Dull Eld is stealing up to shame our passion;
> How shall grey hairs beseem these whispered vows?'

But, for the present, dull Eld and Death were far away; and these two, the Potter and the Painter, started life together with as fair a prospect of contentment as ever fell to the lot of humanity. Perhaps since the days of the Brownings there has been no more perfect instance of a husband and wife who shared a harmony of tastes and a happiness independent of external conditions, since no joy can equal that of the god-like gift of

[1] Of this picture Percy Bate, in his book *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters*, page 112, remarks: 'In the case of Mrs. De Morgan, the more elaborate compositions that she has painted . . . *Love's Passing*, *The Gray Sisters*, that fine work *By the Waters of Babylon* and *The Dawn*, are pictures from her easel distinguished by rich and brilliant colouring, great decorative charm, and sincere poetic inspiration, qualities that mark this artist. . . .'

creation. Even the disparity of years between them tended to enhance this; for the vivid excitability of Evelyn's temperament was counterbalanced by the placidity of De Morgan's maturer outlook; and another characteristic they had in common has before been referred to—a bond of union which the years could not break—an irrepressible sense of humour. Those who work together and laugh together can in truth never stray far from the glamour of Love's piping.

One of the first letters which greeted them in their new home was from Burne-Jones—now convalescent.

'I have risen from a sick bed—that's a hyperbole, the bed wasn't sick, wish it had been, for the disaster could somehow have been remedied. The Influenza is the worst of all diseases—not that I deny the merits of sciatica for a moment.

'You remember my legs?—I humbly ask where they are. The frail collapsible sticks that pretend to support me I deny to be my legs; and a trifle breaks me down . . . not for a moment that your letter was a trifle—far from the contrary.'

But at length he wrote more cheerfully:—

'MY DEAR D. M.,—

'May i come an feed with you of a Wensday next at 7 if i may ill come at 7 nex Wenesday about 7 in the evenin for im a early bird and fowls my own nest about ten on the outside. ive been at the seeside and i am better thank you for astin i were precious done up afore i went along of them pictures, never again i says never again will i be hurried and flustered like that but spend an evenin with you i certainly will and Wenesday at 7 is my umble propojal

'your affec,

'NED.'

'My yph [wife] wants to know if yor mother is in London?'

William De Morgan to Mrs. Burne-Jones.

'DEAR MRS. NED,—

'My Mummy I find has made up her mind to start for Hunstanton—pronounced Hunston—on Tuesday, so I send this line to prevent your trying to look her up. It would be no use your coming to find she had gone to Hunston, spelled Hunstanton—(by the bye, ought spelled to be spelt spelled, or spelled spelt?).'

Later that same year Burne-Jones made merry with the bride and groom over an appropriate letter of which they had become possessed during a brief holiday in Devon.

Copy of a letter found on the beach at Sidmouth by Evelyn De Morgan.

'MY DEAREST MAREY,—

'i be verry well and appey to inform you that i be very well at present and i hope you be the same dear Marey—i be verry sorry to hear how as you don't like your quarters as i chant be able to look on your dear face so offen as i have done dearest Marey pure and holy meek and loly loveley Rose of Sharon. Dear Marey, dear Marey i hant got now Know

particler noose to tell ye at present but my sister that marryd have got such a nice lettel babey, and i wish how as that our littel affare was settled and we had got such a nice lettel dear two.

'Dearest Marey i shall not be appy till then Dearest Marey pure and holy meek and loly lovely Rose of Sharon. Sometimes i do begin to despare as i am affraid our not will never be tide but my Master have prommist i how as that when i git ye he will putt ye in the Darey yard to feed the Piggs and ge ye *atin pens* a week Dearest Marey puer and holey meek and loly lovely Rose of Sharon. i be comming over tomorrow to by the Ring and you must come to the stayshun to mete me and bring a pese of string with you the size of your finggar and be shure you don't make A miss take dear Marey

'Father is A going to ge us a beddsted and Granny A 5 lb note to by such as washin stand fier irons mouse trap and Sope, and wee must wayte till wee can by carpetting and glass crackery ware and chiney. Dearest Marey pure and holy meek and loly lovely rose of Sharon. i be very appy to say our old Sow As got 7 young uns laste nite and Father is a going to ge us A roosester for our Weding Brakefest Dearest Marey pure and holey meek and loly lovely Rose of Sharon. So no more at present from your fewture and loving husband

'WILLIAM TAYLOR.'

But even while through the light-hearted laughter of those days there rings no note of misgiving, not for long could the prosaic troubles of life be kept at bay; and to understand the trend of events it is necessary to glance again at the history of De Morgan's work during the years immediately preceding and following his marriage.

As we have seen, a potter is unfortunately in a different category from that of the painter of pictures in that he is not dependent for the expression of his art upon individual genius or individual effort. Into the materialization of his creation enter faculties other than the artistic—endless commercial considerations and mechanical accessories which add complications to its development. Before he can see the fruition of his dreams, it is necessary to secure and maintain at heavy cost large premises for a factory and workshops, show-rooms in a suitable locality where the work produced can be brought before the eyes of the public; a large staff of salaried coadjutors—efficient draughtsmen to reproduce designs, workmen for each department, salesmen for the show-room; while big kilns have to be kept going and apparatus requisite to the work constructed and reconstructed. 'I have just been half killed with anxiety over the new oven,' De Morgan wrote on Christmas Day, 1889; 'Anyone who wants to be really anxious had better build an oven as big as a house, and have it go wrong at the first firing!' And therein lay the crux of the situation—it was necessary to be prepared to face ever-recurring disaster and loss with a smiling equanimity and ready cash; so that to a man with limited capital it meant a perpetual balancing between output and receipts for which De Morgan of all men remained the least suited.

One of his important undertakings may be cited as a case in point. During visits to Rhodes, Cairo and Damascus, Lord Leighton had made a large collection of lovely Saracenic tiles, besides subsequently procuring some panels, stained glass, and lattice work from Damascus. These, on his return, were fitted into an Arab Hall at Leighton House, which, begun in 1877, was not entirely finished till 1881; and during its construction, it was found that the supply of old tiles was not sufficient to complete the work. De Morgan, therefore, was asked to remedy the deficiency by making replicas of the ancient tiles, as well as by carrying out the scheme of decoration with original tiles of appropriate design. So perfect were his reproductions of the old Syrian ware both in colour and glaze, that it is impossible to distinguish between the ancient and the modern work; while the wonderful blue, intersected by a line of gold, which he employed in the rest of the decoration vies in gorgeousness of hue with the productions of the oriental potters. Nevertheless, this achievement, though an artistic, was not a financial, success, for he found himself five hundred pounds out of pocket by it; a fact of which, needless to say, he never allowed Lord Leighton to be aware. But this was only one of many instances in which the heavy cost of production either exceeded the retail price that he felt it possible to ask, or else threatened to cripple the perfection at which, with the passion of a true artist, he aimed whatever the outlay.

Into the breach, however, his wife stepped buoyantly. A large portion of her capital she devoted unhesitatingly to the support of the fluctuating business; and when remonstrated with, her reply was the derisive comment: 'You don't understand the *feu sacré*!' Her enthusiasm was worthy of the man she had married; and as Sir William Richmond points out, she would have staked her all 'to make one more splendid pot.' During the critical years which followed, there were times indeed when in the incessant anxiety which was her portion, she admitted that the pottery was 'insatiable as Cerberus!' but never for one instant did her courage falter or her devotion slacken, never were her own comfort or her own needs allowed to weigh against the success of the venture in which she knew De Morgan's happiness to be involved.

With the new life infused into it, for a space the enterprise seemed, if not progressing towards financial success, at least heading off financial failure, and sufficiently prosperous to enable De Morgan to pursue without disaster the work on which his heart was set. It is obvious that when a man lives balancing himself perpetually on the edge of a precipice, the conditions are scarcely conducive to the best inspiration; yet it is impossible here to mention in detail the various undertakings which he

accomplished brilliantly throughout this period, including the fine decoration of the Czar's yacht *Livadia*, and that of Sir William Orchardson's house; or the part which he played in inaugurating the Exhibition of Arts and Crafts. But so it was that whenever he seemed about to escape from the sordid considerations which fettered his powers of production, Fate dealt an adverse blow which effectually shattered all that he had been laboriously building up through years of patient striving. Thus it had been in the days of Fitzroy Square when the flames wrecked the manufacture of stained glass just when this was proving remunerative; and thus it was with the pottery at a moment when a fair measure of prosperity again seemed assured.

The symptoms which the doctors believed to indicate that De Morgan was suffering from tuberculosis of the spine reasserted themselves ominously; and a sojourn at Bath failed to allay the evil. The following spring, 1893, he was somewhat opportunely sent out to Cairo on behalf of the Egyptian Government to investigate the facilities for promoting an industry in Egyptian pottery; and the official report which he prepared in this connexion was the first original prose, other than correspondence, which he ever wrote. Meanwhile he endured increasing weakness and pain in the back; and the doctors' fiat was at last decisive that, if his life were to be prolonged, for the future he must always winter abroad.

The fact that the diagnosis which led to this verdict was entirely wrong, and that De Morgan was merely suffering from a severe sprain, adds an irony to the mistake which wrecked his career as a potter. At first, however, the full extent of the disaster entailed by such a banishment was not apparent. With the Spencer-Stanhopes already established in Italy, De Morgan and his wife naturally determined to go thither. Both loved Tuscany, and the thought of escaping from the gloom and fog of a London winter to a sunny climate appealed to them. There, in the clearer atmosphere of Florence, Evelyn's painting would not be hindered by days of darkness, and De Morgan believed that he could carry on his own work without much additional trouble. Still more, an event had recently occurred which made his absence from England during a portion of the year more practicable.

In 1892 Sophia De Morgan died as she had lived, a picturesque and remarkable figure to the last. 'Of William's mother I could write from memories full of affection and admiration,' records Miss Morris. 'In earlier days she had been in the forefront of the philanthropy and the schemes of education which the condition of the country at that time seemed to call for at private hands. When we knew her she was a slender, transparent being, tall and fragile and worn by sorrows; her dignity

of bearing and the keen interest and pleasure she took in the life around her an example to all.' Yet despite the serenity of old age, there were times when Sophia De Morgan might well have posed as 'Our Lady of Sorrows'—Our Lady when the sword had pierced her heart and the glory of motherhood had been turned to anguish. Since the sunny days at Fordhook when, as a young wife, she had tended her babies with such zealous care, she had seen, first her husband, and then five of her children—sons and daughters of rare promise—laid in a premature grave. Yet the faith which never left her in the nearness of the unseen world had supported her in each successive loss; even while she exhibited few of the idiosyncrasies of the average mystic. Her brain was clear and penetrating; she was full of interest in all the topics of the day—in literature, art and science; while she was still alert to receive new impressions and to welcome an order of things to which she was unaccustomed. 'Far from being frightened at new ideas,' her daughter relates, 'she welcomed with interest any new theory, even though it obliged her to do battle in the cause of some of her cherished beliefs. Her powers of enjoyment never failed her, her love of Nature and the great pleasure she took therein. . . . It is often said that the power of making friends departs in later life, but with my mother this was not the case; she was able to form friendships and take up new interests at eighty with almost the vigour and warmth of eighteen. Naturally of an optimistic temperament, she dwelt often upon the great improvements of the times, unlike most old people, declaring that the world had grown better since her youth.'

In 1887 she wrote her Reminiscences; and five years later, an octogenarian with faculties unclouded and the love of life undiminished, she passed away peacefully in her sleep. 'Such an end,' records her daughter, 'as she would doubtless have desired, or, as she, according to her strong beliefs, would have said—such a passing to another life to begin afresh.'

With her death, one of the strongest links which bound De Morgan to England was severed; and he turned his attention bravely to duplicating his business out in Florence, whence he hoped to direct and govern the distant factory in Fulham.

'Thus,' relates Miss Morris, 'began that dual existence, tantalizing and somewhat mournful to a man of warm affections and keen interests in his own country, but yet not without its compensations. Of late years Florence has been deteriorating with increasing speed; but in 1893, though the city had already lost many of her greatest charms, she was still full of delight, and there were many corners of quiet beauty where the shadows of her noblest days yet lingered. The De Morgans settled down

in the city, and spent the week-ends with the Spencer-Stanhopes on the Bellosquardo Hill, where the amenities of English villa life awaited them, among those stately gardens amid the penetrating magic that hangs over the flowered terraces and scented pine-woods of the ancient Tuscan land. Here in Florence the designing was carried on, and that part of the work which could be done away from the factory in London. Picture a Florentine workshop 'betwixt sun and shade,' a long building in the garden fragrant with roses, growing Italian-fashion in their unimaginable masses, where six or seven men worked under the most delightful conditions. Those who have seen Tuscan craftsmen at work know what they have inherited from that past of which we still know so little in detail. None of the men were trained painters—just common *imbianchini*, whom De Morgan taught to work in his method, and of them he said "he never had had to do with such hands and eyes." In his workshop, with a high standard of work and high wages, they quickly improved their worldly positions and became "signori"; and all was well. We must suppose that they were equally happy later, when the influence had passed from them, and—still signori—they modelled figurini of ballet-girls and all the cheap, humorous statuary from which the sensitive visitor to Florence averts his eyes in passing; but there it is, so much fine teaching, so much admirable skill, and the result as ephemeral as a summer day. . . .

'The invention that enabled the pottery to continue under these changed domestic conditions was applied to the tiles, which formed a large part of the business, and which were now all painted in Italy. The design was not painted direct on the tile but on a whity-brown paper (they could not get it bad enough in Italy, the home of beautiful *cartamano*) stuck with a little soap on a slightly slanted piece of glass, the semi-transparency giving the draughtsmen greater power over the colour. When a quantity of the paintings were ready they were sent in rolls to the London factory; here the painted paper was fixed on the tile and the whole was covered with glaze and fired, when the paper burned right away, leaving the paint on the clay unimpaired. Specimens of new design, or of a change in colouring, were sent over to Florence to be looked at and corrected if need be.' [1]

Very thin tiles were likewise specially prepared and baked in London in order to be sent out by post to Florence so that De Morgan could judge of their quality and effect; while drawings executed by him were as constantly sent over to Fulham, and a code was established by which he could telegraph instructions to the heads there during his absence. Most of the pots, however, were painted in England, save a few which, later, were baked

[1] *The Burlington Magazine*, August, 1917, Article 'William De Morgan,' by Miss May Morris.

in the kilns of Cantagalli as a commission. So the new business gradually got in order; and as Miss Morris points out, there were compensations even in an exile which he soon found doubled his work and involved additional anxiety.

For one, in what became the annual routine of that migration to Italy, he travelled out by sea, as he could not bear the long train-journey which jarred his spine; and in the midst of his strenuous life, he grew to look forward with inexpressible pleasure to the restful days of dreamy inactivity on board ship when the exhilarating breezes whipped his brain into greater activity and braced his delicate constitution. Like his wife, he had a passionate love of the ocean and its moods; the ever-changing colour and mystery of its unfathomed depths, domed by a limitless space of sky, stirred all the artist and the poet in him, and filled him with delight. 'When I die,' he said to her once, penetrated with the beauty of the scene at which he had been gazing, 'I should like to be buried at sea during a glorious sunrise off the Islands of Majorca and Minorca.'

Moreover, once established amid the roses and the sunlight of Florence, he appreciated the keen co-operation of the deft and nimble Italians, so quick to interpret mechanically ideas to which they had never previously been accustomed, and which, from an artistic standpoint, they yet entirely failed to understand. His own happy-go-lucky nature and his imperturbable good-humour awoke an answering chord in their hearts, so that they soon came to regard him with an adoring devotion; while he, on his part, entered with zest into the spirit of the wayward Southern temperament. Thus when they were lazy, he named the particular pattern over which they had dawdled unconscionably the *Pochi* (forthwith wonderingly pronounced *Pokey* by the Fulham workmen), 'because,' he explains, 'they did so few in a week that I put them on piece-work on another new one, which had to be christened *Molto*!' and the jest, over which the *imbianchini* made merry like children, caused them to produce *Moltos* with a vigour to which no angry remonstrance could have moved them.

In like manner, the week-ends snatched from work were looked forward to by De Morgan with increasing enjoyment. Spencer-Stanhope, the charm of whose rare personality endeared him to all, was a man of wit and originality of outlook, who was in sympathy with most of De Morgan's views of life and art, while the beautiful Villa where he lived was a centre alike for the English colony in Florence and for birds of passage, among whom were many acquaintances and comrades shared by himself and De Morgan from a far-away past. Friends from England were constantly appearing unexpectedly in Florence; and, among others, Miss Morris came to winter at the fourteenth-

century Villa Mercedes, adding yet another to the many links which were binding the potter to the new home of his adoption.

'Among all the affectionate remembrances of De Morgan stored with other treasures of memory,' she wrote many years afterwards, 'I like to linger over the Italian times and to feel that the beautiful side of his life in Florence must have been a comfort to a man wearing out brain and body over a business whose most triumphant successes did but spell anxiety and the prospect of commercial non-success in the long run. Every week the De Morgans left the clamour of the city and wound their way through the *poderi* and up the flowered terraces to Villa Nuti, where they could enjoy that vision of the noble valley wrapped in its luminous veils, and the cypress-clad *poggi* of the upland country that stretches south away. Happy in his English friends there, happy in the matter-of-fact, good-humoured Tuscan contadini, happy in the humble beautiful things of the frugal Italian life of the people, he could rest and absorb the "attainable good" with that bearing of a philosopher that became him so well in later life. In another villa on the hill he was also affectionately welcomed. We would sit long after the evening meal watching the fire-flies mingle with the stars in the blue night above the Arno valley. At times the talk fell into friendly silence, and the nightingale's song and the scent from the rose-bowers and the lily-hedges, seemed to weave more closely about us all that spell of sympathy that no trivial thing from without could ever break—nor ever has broken.'

De Morgan had not been long established in Florence when he wrote to endeavour to tempt Burne-Jones to follow his plan of migration.

William De Morgan to Edward Burne-Jones.

'15 LUNGO IL MUGNONE,
'FLORENCE,
'*Nov. 17th*, '93.

'DEAR NED,—

'I said as how I was a-going to write and persuade you to come and winter here, and here's half the winter gone, and it's a hawful pity—and there you are choking in the fogs, and not painting all the possible pictures by Burne-Jones, and you're the only cove that can do them that I know.

'Well, I'm just a-writing now because my conscience struck me when I saw stuck up "*App.—Studio*"—only I haven't been about much owing to stopping in the house for a cold, so I hadn't opportunities for to see *App. studios* before. Well, I went and saw it and found it was nice and big, and only Seshento Shinkwarnter per annum, that is 50 L., only in Italy 50 L. means about 26 pounds English. And I thought to myself what a pity Mr. Burne-Jones couldn't be a-painting in this here studio instead of—I stopped short there, because I don't wish to say anything against my native village.

'However, I know it seems cruel to twit you with your circumstances, so I will say not a word about what the colour of the sky was overhead

when I came out from that studio, nor will I so much as hint what it was over the Carrara mountains, and I will draw a veil over those mountains that you may remain in ignorance of a particular complexion they got off of the sunset. These are things that it is only Christian to conceal from the Northern sufferer. I could not wish you (for your own sake) to realize that it's along of the snow on the mountains that they get that colour, and that it doesn't come down here, and the flowers, *fiori della terra*, are a-blowing and a-growing still, and you can buy any quantity you like for trentashinkwy at the stone bench along by the Strozzi. No! my only doubt is if I oughtn't to write and assure you that the whole place is changed into Bayswater—which it isn't and can't be, though they've done a good bit that way—and that it's a cold, cold place and a reeking nest of typhoid, and a few more similar b—dy lies to console you for your winter quarters. We've done a good lot of stopping in the house, because some Americans left the window open on the rail in the Apennines, and I cotched cold—and all the while *they* thought we wanted it open, and they didn't! *Why* did Columbus discover America, one may well ask?

'Give my love to your wife, and children, and children's children.'

The answer to this letter has not survived; but in a communication from Burne-Jones the following spring, reference is made to the fact that the latter had just accepted a Baronetcy. He had dined with William Morris the night before the announcement appeared in the press; but had not had courage to confess to so ardent a Socialist the back-sliding of which he had been guilty, so that Morris only learnt the painful tidings from *The Times* the next morning. The subject was never subsequently referred to between the friends.

Edward Burne-Jones to William De Morgan.

'*March*, '94.

'DEAR D. M.,—

'[In pencil] Your letter was a delight.

'This will not be a corresponding delight—for I am writing in a train—the only quiet place I can find at present, and it jumps and jogs; but if I put off writing I shall never do it—that is my way.

'So try and read this.—Fitz Burne-Jones I left in bed, for it was very early—it was only 9 o'clock—I didn't know it was so hard to write, or I shouldn't have begun. . . .

'I wouldn't have begun many things if I had known they were so hard.

'The picture I am doing, for instance!

'It represents, but no we won't go into that——'

'DEAR D. M.,—

'I tried to write you a letter in a railway train yesterday, but couldn't get on with it, it jogged so—not the letter but the train. I enclose the precious fragment for its autographic value. If it had been written in ink it might have been worth 4*d*. sterling.

'All you say in your letter is so. I should like to tell you privately that I accepted this haughty eminence to gratify Mr. Morris. I hope soon to be able to write the Right Revd. Mr. Morris. His perpetual invectives against the bourgeois did at last, I confess, affect my mind, and I believe now he's thoroughly gratified. . . .

'We had a miserable month of January—a despair of a month. Everybody who wasn't dead was ill, and everybody who wasn't ill was ruined.

. . . A worse time for calamities of friends has never happened to us, but we begin to breathe again.

'It was nice hearing from you. My mind has been tormented all the day, because some one asked me a riddle, and even told me the answer to it, and still I can't understand.

'The answer is a real answer, and no nonsense I believe, but it's no good, I can't make it out, and here it is—

'Ques. When is a mouse if it spins?

'Ans. The higher it gets, the fewer.

'If I don't answer it before a month is out, I shall be lost.

'All of us's loves to you all.

'Yours affct.,
'E. B. J.
'per se.'

Meanwhile De Morgan found orders pouring in despite his absence from Fulham. 'We are now settled here,' he wrote, 'and are desperately busy. Evelyn has got well to work, and is going ahead. I am muddling on without doing much execution.' Perhaps one of the first events which brought home to him the difficulties occasioned by his absence from England was a commission which arrived from the Directors of the P. & O. liners. With the Czar's yacht as a precedent, they wished to have some of their ships decorated in similar fashion with tiles and panels; and De Morgan received the intimation in Florence with mingled alarm and protest.

'In the first place,' he wrote to his partner Ricardo, 'the designs must either be figure pictures, or not. If not, I cannot conceive how our utmost resources of landscape, ship, fish, or inscription can compass such a subject as, for instance, Penelope and her suitors. We could have the web in front and a label to say that the suitors and Penelope are behind it, certainly; and Ulysses in the Hall of Antenor could be managed in similar fashion—an outside view of the Hall with Ulysses inside; but no Architecture could be worked into Polyphemus, on any terms! If these are to be figure pictures, do you actually believe, in seriousness and sobriety, in the possibility of getting out of *me*, between this December and next August, seven huge pictures and eight large ditto containing sufficient indication of the human form, conventional or otherwise, to pass muster before a Committee of P. & O. directors, or indeed to give satisfaction to any human creature, however uncritical? But stop! it isn't even August—it is *by then* that the whole work has to be finished, and the design completed and shown first!!! No, clearly you never could have supposed that I could do these designs . . . and what grounds have we for supposing that any figure work, properly so called, can be executed by any of the artists we are employing?'

None the less, he eventually agreed to undertake the work conditionally upon a reasonable extension of the time it was to

occupy, although the worry connected with carrying through such an undertaking, under pressure, and at a distance, can be dimly imagined. Six large ships were thus decorated by De Morgan, the *Arabic*, the *Palawan*, the *Sumatra*, the *China*, the *Malta* and the *Persia*, the designs being prepared by him in Florence and dispatched thence to Fulham by means of the process described by Miss Morris.

'My pictures,' he wrote to Ricardo, 'represent a voyage of a ship round the world and all the strange dangers she meets with. First, she runs on a rock—then an earthquake shakes her off—then I propose to do her dangers from the Sirens and the Sea Serpent, only the Sea Serpent will also be attracted by the Sirens and eat them—so the ship will get off scot-free. If the Directors think this improbable, we must rationalize the topic down to correctitude. As far as it goes, now, there is no physical impossibility in the incidents—except to very narrer-minded blokes.

'The big pictures are China, India, the Overland Route, Japan and you and me and Collcutt (of the P. & O.) tiger-hunting when we were in the army, in the Deccan and the Punjaub. The 'ansum one is me. The two Islands with panthers and sich-like are, for instance, Surinam and Krakatoa—anyhow, nasty places for mariners to be driven on shore in—but capital sport for a rod and gun. These are done in a hurry and the geography will have to be sorter sifted out and arranged before we proceed. The blue in the friezes are enough to freeze the souls of any ship's crew—*Macte virtutibus*—you and Fred and all.'

'The difficulty,' he wrote later, 'has been to know what to do and how to do it, especially the quasi-naturalisms foreign to the nature of my designs—because their nature is to have no nature. The last panel contains: 1. The ruin of a Corinthian temple; 2. Pentonville Prison; 3. Fiesole, and in the middle-distance, Eel-pie Island—it's very local.'

Apart from this jesting, however, the designs when completed were exceptionally fine, and also appropriate, as De Morgan had conceived the idea of portraying in them some of the cities and famous places which the respective boats were destined to pass in the course of their voyages.

Thus one exhibited a vista of the white cliffs and green verdure of old England; another, a view of the city of London intersected by the river Thames; yet another, the same city in olden times with its Abbey and Cathedral depicted, and picturesque mediæval houses fashioning quaint, crooked streets. A companion panel, in marked contrast, showed a scene of devastation in a distant part of the globe, with Nature in angry mood beneath a sullen sky; a storm with lightning flashing and towers falling, volcanoes smoking redly, and, in the lurid glow, a back-

ground of purple mountains. Again, there were scenes of some smiling tropical land, with fruit-laden trees, tapering palms and prowling beasts; and there were realistic landscapes typical of different countries—China, depicted with wooded hills and yellow-sailed junks; Japan, represented by a scene with Fuji-yama in the background, and in the foreground storks and fisher boats drawn with a clever suggestion of Japanese Art; India, represented by the hunting expedition aforesaid, in which grey elephants and golden tigers formed a pattern instinct with life. Infinite in beauty and variety, the scenes were at once original and realistic; and it is sad to reflect that all of these great ships with their unique decoration, as well as the Imperial yacht *Livadia*, now lie at the bottom of the sea.

Meantime, in tragic contrast to the brighter side of his life in Florence, De Morgan was discovering more and more that endless vexations and difficulties were entailed by his absence from Fulham, for which he had been only partially prepared. In the first place, the posts to and from Italy were erratic; important correspondence was delayed in transit, or a letter sent cancelling previous instructions arrived before the one which it was intended to revoke, thus creating confusion in the mind of the recipient. To endeavour to cope at all by post with the manifold complications of a business, the success or failure of which hung eternally on the hazard of the die, required almost superhuman effort. The chemical problems incessantly needing elucidation, the unaccountable vagaries of machinery and consequently of firing, the endless experiments in fresh methods of production—all demanded an exhaustive and personal supervision for which correspondence was an ineffectual substitute. Added to this, there were the complications of accounts to be balanced between London and Italy, and minor matters which required tactful adjustment amongst his employees who, besides petty differences which occasionally arose between them, suffered materially from the loss of his creative force and the personal magnetism of his presence now withdrawn during many months, so that something of the old vitality passed for ever from their labour.

'I am as certain as I can be of anything human,' he remarks, 'that Iles, Passenger, Ewbank, Dring—all of them will work well in proportion as they feel in direct communication with me. And this even at the risk of postal delays creating a ripple of seeming contradiction between some things in two of my letters.' But after one of the annual transitions to Florence we find him complaining to a friend: 'The difficulty of the position forced upon me by these alternations of England and Italy is almost insuperable. I was during the last few weeks before leaving England completely bewildered by the demands of business, the

desire to see what I could of my friends, and the inability to achieve satisfaction in either point owing to physical exhaustion always supervening at unfavourable moments, just when I wanted to rush here or gallop there to see after this, that or the other. We started with everything undone and incomplete. . . . A new spine and new eyes would be welcome. . . . Forgive my apparent extinction for long periods! I always seem to be somewhere else. This constant occupation swallows me up.'

The story of the years which followed is a sorry tale of ever-increasing anxiety and of a brave spirit battling against odds which were overwhelming. Only those who have read De Morgan's private correspondence during this period can realize the mental strain which he endured, and can do credit to the unvarying patience and the unfailing, if pathetic, humour with which he met and mocked the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.' There is a peculiar sadness in the thought that a man of his temperament, so full of contentment, so easily rendered happy, with gifts which added a glory to existence, was destined to have all his days poisoned by sordid cares. Yet so it was. Handicapped thus by delicate health, handicapped by the gnawing lack of capital and the exile which was proving fatal to his enterprise, he fought desperately for an Art which to him was dearer than life itself; but always with the grim knowledge that the odds against him were ever increasing.

Still more, in England, the effect of his absence was to deepen an impression amongst his employees, to which previous tradition had long inured them, that the artistic, and not the financial, success of the undertaking was the sole aim which they must keep in view. That the existence of the one was dependent upon the other—that the retail price of their output must at least balance the cost of production if the work was to continue, was a point of view which, more and more, was lost sight of. An instance of this may be mentioned. A visitor who went to the factory in De Morgan Road on one occasion asked the price of a giant vase of gorgeous hue. '£35 is the price we put on it,' replied the Manager, 'but'—with some amusement—'I doubt if anyone will give it! and it cost us £80 to produce!' Some lovely pots were exhibited, and the visitor again inquired the price. 'We don't want to sell these,' was the reply, 'we could have sold them over and over again, but we like to keep a bit of good stuff to show Mr. De Morgan when he comes home!' The visitor's comment was '*C'est magnifique—mais ce n'est pas le commerce!*'

Moreover, in the standard of artistic excellence a less high level was attained; and of this De Morgan became painfully aware. 'As for myself,' he wrote, 'I am chiefly vexed at the unsettled conditions of my life making it impossible for me to

contribute any sort of animation to the work, such as I formerly looked upon as the essence of the whole thing. . . . Investigation and experiment seem now to belong to a remote and happy past, and the business itself to have settled down, as far as "Art" goes, into the incessant reproduction of patterns drawn by me a quarter of a century since. . . . Meanwhile it is the big idle capital that gobbles up the profit—the factory might be christened Jonah's whale!' 'The tradition at Fulham,' wrote Halsey Ricardo at length, 'as it has developed in consequence of De Morgan's bad health and necessary absence, is not now a good one; and there is no one, there can be no one, who can pull it straight. The standard of efficiency has settled down into a dull undesired excellence; the chaps have grown to think that conscientious industry is the whole duty of man. It is impossible to explain to them that the justification of handiwork demands something more than this; and it is impossible, if they don't see it, either to quarrel with them or to blame them. But the result has lost the freshness and companionableness that D. M.'s own pottery used to have.' In certain instances, not only was De Morgan's original grace of line and fancy lost sight of, but occasionally, when one of his designs was introduced as a central idea, a surrounding decoration of more conventional type was added by painters, who were even known, for lack of initiative, to employ some commonplace pattern which they borrowed from an ordinary wall-paper! While realizing this, Mr. Ricardo, owing to the pressure of his work as an architect, was only able to bestow on the factory a very divided attention; and in 1897, Mr. Reginald Blunt was asked by De Morgan to supplement the essential supervision.

'I was invited,' relates Mr. Blunt, 'for the next three winters, to supervise the doings at De Morgan Road as General Manager and "Chancellor of the Exchequer" . . . the arrangement helped to make possible the continuance of the factory, though the Chancellor's Treasury suffered from chronic depletion; but the enforced absence of its chief was, of course, a severe handicap. The whole of the making and the firing of the pots, and the decoration of the latter had naturally to be done in Fulham, as well as the scheming of the orders, the building and repairs of the kilns and machinery, and the endless minutiæ of works management. . . .

'I reported our doings and difficulties fully to Florence every week . . . and through all its worries and anxieties it was made delightful by De Morgan's unfailing kindness and by the charm and patience and all-pervading humour of his long weekly letters. . . . It is, in some ways, a melancholy, though never depressing or despondent, record; for monetary difficulties, chiefly due to the insufficiency of the initial capital, run like a black thread—or rather, perhaps a hampering barbed wire

entanglement—through every page of it. Yet there is so much of pure jollity, of gentle humour and of genuine human kindliness in these natural and often hastily scrawled letters . . . [that they] help to give a little further insight into an inspiring, loveable, and most sympathetic character.'

At first the letters, from which it is possible to give only a few random extracts, dealt with technicalities of the work which, even when not of interest to the general reader, serve to convey some faint impression of the range of De Morgan's activities.

William De Morgan to Reginald Blunt.

'LUNGO IL MUGNONE.

'*Nov. 14th*, '97.

'From what Iles says about the big kiln, I imagine that if the floor holds out long enough he will get it into complete working order, and run up the stock of plain tiles to cheapening point, which I look to as to a Millennium—clay in barges of 80 tons from Stourbridge—a mill turning out 5 tons per diem of body—all the rooms full of workers, and 18/- a yard for turquoise tiles—that's my idea of things. As for there being *no market*, that's simple nonsense—There's the whole wide world, and what can one want more!

'I have not heard that the ship panels have reached safely but I presume that they have done so as I have not heard to the contrary.

'Are you making use of the revolving grate at the factory? [One of De Morgan's own inventions.] I mean has it been put in so as to revolve properly, and illustrate its smoke-consuming properties with only Wallsend coal? If not, please make Fred Iles put it on a pivot so as to spin freely, see that the chimney is clear, and give it a trial. If you like the looks of it, we could have a decent-looking casting made for the fire-bar portion, and have it fitted in the front room in Great Marlborough Street, where it would go in very well. We could get a lot of people in to see it, under the pretext of curing the smoke, and then sell them tiles! (A story about Dr. Johnson in a boat on the river naturally occurs to one.)

'Re the red tiles, the differences are entirely due to firing—the thickness of the colour laid has no effect. . . .'

'*Nov. 30th*, 1897.

'Re the lustre—of this I am certain, that every glaze that is susceptible at all can give a good lustre. Because on a six inch tile every now and again one always gets a gradation passing from mere red to copper metal, such as you might rightly object to.

'But between the extremes there is always the red reflection from a different local tint, which is usually at its best when the local tint is brown. The English potteries, where they make lustre, bring their results too much to mere blood-red and copper shine.

'I should like very much next spring to have a regular campaign at lustre. Tell me if you think circumstances would allow of building the new kiln and I will send the drawing. There is no doubt that the gas kiln is the best form of lustre kiln, it is so manageable.

'Re price of pots—[this in humorous answer to a request from Mr. Blunt respecting a basis for prices]—I know there is some way of doing this. Multiply the height in inches by the largest diameter in centimetres and divide by the number of hours employed. Multiply this result by the

BARREL-SHAPED VASE, WITH DOMED COVER,

Bequeathed by Evelyn De Morgan to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

It is in shades of purple, gold and silver lustre, with a pattern of vines. It was one of the last vases produced by De Morgan before he closed the factory, and he is depicted clasping it in the portrait by his wife (see page 316).

Height, 6⅜. Diameter, 4¼ inches.

logarithm of the number of shillings per week, and it will give the price of the pot in halfpence— But who shall discover it ?

'The only thing is to make trials and see.

'Suppose we try the *contents* of the pot as a gauge—say a shilling an ounce for decorated pots ? None of our pots contains less than 5 or 6 ozs. of water, and none is priced under five or six shillings. I can't remember how many ounces go to a pint, so I can carry the inquiry no further. But see Ewbank and get him to make a record of how much a selection of pots contains per head and what the present marked price is. Perhaps it would be fair to consider the bulk of the pot as a factor. This could be done by weighing it dry and calculating the bulk of an equal bulk of water from the relative sp. grs. and adding it to the contents. Perhaps it would be wise to let it alone !

'I want chemistry to tell me whether lead tin and aluminium would give a good white glaze, analogous to the lead and tin used now for majolica—but harder. Worm this out of the Polytechnic. . . .

'*Later.*

'I am so horribly stupid in taking for granted that others know things because I do !—I say to myself "Why *I* know that surely *he* must ? In the case of the tin and aluminiums I was taking for granted that at the Polytechnic the commercial preparation of *Calcine*, or combined oxides of lead and tin, would be in the mouths of babes and sucklings. It is the only known method (recent discoveries perhaps apart) of causing the suspension of the white tin oxide in glass undissolved. It is like mechanical suspension in water, I take it. And the white enamels and Majolicas lack the hardness of crystalline glaze accordingly. Calcine is prepared by raking the scum off melted lead and tin. This scum is the calcine oxides which are true compounds or not according to the proportions of the metals.

'*Xmas.* 1897.

'It certainly speaks well for our perishing trade that £58 worth of goods were sold last week, and that we are certain of purchasers for all those marked *urgent* in your list and Ewbank's. It seems to me that my view is the correct one—that the poor trade is famished not for want of customers, but stock. . . . Ewbank tells me that the demand far exceeds the supply. . . .

'What we have to do is to try the experiment (for the first time) of reducing our production cost by multiplying our output, and offering it in the market at a reasonable commercial profit. When this has been tried and failed, we will talk over the desirability of giving up the fruits of all the labour and thought I have given during twenty years past to completing the process.

'I have been very bad with sciatica—no possible attitude for sleep. But I'm better now—the dry weather is setting me up.

'The merriest of Xmases to all—and as little fog as may be !

'*Jan. 2nd* 1898.

'I'm glad there is not a bill before Parliament to make it penal not to be able to reconcile accounts of kilns. Here are *yours*, *Ricardo's* and *Iles's*, which I cannot find belong to different kilns.

Yours.	*Ricardo's.*	*Iles's.*
Dec. 30th. We had a lot of salted and pock-marked tiles out of the last kiln or two, and a lot of blistered ones from a previous kiln.	Dec. 18th. We are in a vein of bad luck at the factory, blisters, or salt, have damaged—very badly —more than ½ of the last glaze kiln.	Dec. 10th. Big glaze kiln of plain colours. It was fired very nicely indeed—quite free from salt. Dec. 15th. Small glaze kiln of painted pottery very good.

'I incline to the opinion that your intermediate statement is the safest to lean on. Re blisters—I have never been able to trace these to anything but rather too quick a heat at first. It is just the first flare of the wood that does it. When they have dried very slowly they are liable to it, I believe.

'*Jan. 8th.*

'The blistering of tiles seems to break out in my absence always. . . . It is due to a spontaneous separation of colour from ground or paint from paper, it is a thousand to one it depends on the warmth of combination in the silicate. If so, tiles warmed to over boiling point immediately after laying ought to show the defect very much less than those that dry gradually. Try two halves of one lot each way.

'*Jan. 14th.*

'The vicious appearance of so much modern earthenware is due to the dry lathing much more than to the tint of the body—and none can vary tints *ad lib* by solution of colouring salts. The worst of it is that most of the Wenger bodies have a little cobalt in them, like washer-woman's blue in whitewash, where only yellow ochre ought to reign supreme.

'I shall be sending this week the Daisy and Anemone patterns for the great Rothschild. I understand he wants turquoise blue to be turquoise blue and not green, like Ally Sloper's boy who wanted tea for tea—and declined whiskey.

'If the Devil don't take the Fulham Vestry, he don't deserve to be devil no longer, as the Lincolnshire farmer said.

'At present the undigested errors of our early system, that of baiting for small orders with samples, lies heavy on our commercial stomach.

'Going in for plain tiles on a large scale at low prices is my idea, and has been ever since we built a large factory in '88 expressly for that very purpose.

'Clean and prompt firing, and low prices, are the solution of our difficulties. . . .

'No kiln can possibly have too much draught. Whatever the local heat of the fires may be, it can be tempered by admission of air before it enters the flues, and an excess of atmosphere in the flue is good and sulphur-destroying.

'I believe many of these colour troubles would be solved if we could have *wood* kilns instead of coke or coal. If I had unlimited resources I would build one straight away. And the wear and tear of a wood kiln would be less, owing to the formation of less clinkers.

'The presence of the green tiles does endanger the blue ones without a doubt, but we can always have a special kiln for each colour. I have never thought the *amount* of harm done by the green to the blue was enough to make special efforts against it needful. It certainly is not the cause of the unexplained variations in the turquoise, as we can get these in kilns with no green.

'*Feb. 3rd*, 1898.

'I discern in the Pot [one which had been sent out for his inspection] a confirmation of what I have inferred and been hoping, viz.; that the lustre kiln has *not* been behaving very badly. The present defects of our lustre are not in the process, but in the ground—I do not know how it is, but no really good thing ever comes from the Potteries—and it's stranger in the case of Wenger's enamel than in other things, because I fancy Wenger doesn't *weng* it at all, but gets it from some foreign Wenger. If it's made in Germany, that of course would account for it, as all German excellence goes into lead pencils.

'*March 1st.*

'Re your inquiries about lustre process—(1) The test pieces *ought* to be at their best at the moment of stopping. But if stopped too soon the first lustre (which is the best) burns out, and remains pale. There is one moment (if one could always spot it) when it would be best to cool the muffle as suddenly as possible. Weak lustres, long fired, give the best chance for deliberation, whereas strong lustres fire quick, but jump at the end.

'(2) My experience is that the strength depends on the strength of the mixture, not on the thickness. One sees no brush-streak in the colour, or rarely. Nevertheless there is a thinness at which quantity tells, only within its limits you get little lustre, toned red.

'(3) The more experiments the better . . . I should like to have a lustre campaign this summer, if not worried into my grave.

'*March 17th.*

'I hope the weak lustres have gone or will go well. All that's necessary for their success is a continued low temperature and much longer firing.

'Bismuth makes very good and very soft glazes, but they are dear. I never investigated them properly.

'I don't like the red on the pottery tiles, nor on any hand glaze. It's too violent and butcherous. But a glaze containing some soda—say the materials of the hand glaze we use on the tiles mixed with tin calcine might do very well.

'*March* 29, '98.

'The colour and quality of lustre are absolutely due to firing and not a bit to thickness of colour. If you paint several thicknesses of colour on one tile you will find no practical difference between any two above the thickness of a mere transparent wash, and this will be motley and weak.

'If the new kiln salts, it will (according to my religion) be that the fires have been too heavily stoked. Small bright fires are the game.

'Are the small-pox marks over or under the colour? If under, just make a trial of dusting black lead over the surface of the paper before sticking. Why the ordinary tiles should play tricks I can't imagine, if the Fulham ones don't, for I can't find that there is any difference in the method.

'I am sending a frieze of Cherubs' heads, which must have a harder glaze than usual, and thin, or they'll all float up. . . . They are painted in colour mixed with pure gum Arabic. . . . I thought I couldn't work on the tiles now because of old age—but it was the Dextrine in the gum. I expect it will turn out that, what with retarded work and blistering, this alone has cost us hundreds of pounds.

'*March 30th.*

'I don't understand the disappearance of the luck in Glazes. Last year Iles did very well. However, it is much the same at Cantagalli. When *he* goes the lustre deteriorates.'

Gradually the letters wax more despondent. 'I am glad you take such a sanguine view of the work,' he writes, 'my view is —sanguinary! I observe that our tiles now cost us more to make them than our calculated expense in Chelsea 20 years ago. Ewbank's reports look very poor as to finances. Don't soften anything. Show it me at its worst. I fear you are having a dreary time, but "just now" is always dreary!'

In another letter he writes: 'What I said about goodwill was only a way of putting the unpleasant fact that if *it* or *something* isn't there to represent it we have lost £3,112. Of course we have! . . you see we never have had a *system* of accounts,

with mine or anyone else's.' Again, he propounds an idea, the simplicity of which is evidently unconscious: 'As I shall have nothing coming in from the home factory, and I am nearly cleaned out, *I am endeavouring to run the concern here* [*in Florence*] *at a small profit*, with a view to making something for myself!' This is obviously put forward as a notion commendable for its novelty. In one of his communications to Halsey Ricardo about this date, he further remarks with a humour which probably failed to appeal to its recipient, 'I am sure you will be surprised and pleased to learn that I owe you a sum of money, even as I am surprised and disgusted. But then *your* delight will be qualified by hearing that I cannot pay!'

Again in the spring of 1908 we find him writing tragically:—

'I have done my feeble best, but genius alone could have handled the position—or capital! Neither was forthcoming.

'For the moment, the men are going on again heroically on the terms that I am to send money when I get it—I wish I may get it. It is all such a great pity, for we had lately got over some bad difficulties in process, notably coke-sulphuring and slow tile-colouring. I shall go on until absolutely strangled off, and execution threatened. . . .

'Browning says, "Sudden the worst turns the best to the brave." I wonder if effrontery is a good substitute for courage in this connexion, as if so I certainly deserve a good turn from Fate!'

The transition to London in the summer of 1898 did not tend to raise his spirits, judging by the unwonted note of melancholy in the following letter:—

William De Morgan to Mrs. Morris.

'*Sept.* 19, '98,
'CHELSEA.

'MY DEAR MRS. MORRIS,—

'It was very kind of you to send me the little book. If I am to live to be my father's age when he died, I have still ten per cent. of my life before me, and in that time my memories of the nine-tenths gone before must needs make a great deal of whatever is happy and satisfactory in them. For indeed it does seem to me now that the most part of what made me look forward to coming back each spring to England has disappeared.

'The great, fortunate friendships of my life, of which we know, have left gaps nothing can fill up, especially as our long absences each winter cut me away, more than most, from our fellow creatures in this country.

'I should have liked to have come to see you in the country again, at the old place—but really the way long railway journeys knock me about, and the stress of steering my perplexing business combined, never let me go so far as to entertain the idea or to find out whether I was, or was not, a bit cowardly about coming. The journey from my brother-in-law in Devon made my spinal column feel *very* unlike Cleopatra's needle! and I was as it were obliged to make myself promise not to do so any more. None the less I bike down to the factory daily, to hear which of our debtors has gone bankrupt, and what goods have been returned on our hands with scorn and loathing—that's business!

'My love to you and Jenny and the old house. I wish we might look

forward to seeing you in Florence some day—(that reads like an invitation —but lor bless you, we never have room to swing a cat !) '

As the shadows deepened round the doomed factory, the threatened retirement of Halsey Ricardo from the business and the consequent disintegration of a portion of the capital which financed it made disaster imminent. Even at that juncture it was pointed out to De Morgan that if he could remain for one winter in England this would probably turn the tide in his ebbing fortunes; but his wife was obdurate. Ruin stared her in the face, but that prospect was less to be dreaded than the alternative which confronted her. 'I would rather lose every penny I possess,' she wrote decisively with her usual selflessness, 'than, in view of the doctor's verdict, that William should run the risk of one extra month in England.'

During the autumn which followed, the Duke of Bedford ordered panels for the Woburn dairy, and these De Morgan designed out in Florence with a frieze in gay-hued parrots upon a pale blue ground. 'I have just completed a lovely droring for the Duke's dairy based on our falcon panel,' he writes. 'It will keep the factory going for a whole month, but will take three months to execute. I have my doubts of that's paying—I have my doubts of all accepted orders paying—even the biggest.' In the following January, 1899, he says: 'The Bedford tiles are decided on and the sketch will be returned to the factory. I am going to have it out here to make a new cartoon from, and then mean to send it back to Fred Passenger to be executed in London. I am dosing the chaps out here with more than enough new work. I am at work on big figures and various sundries at this moment.' And he concludes with a recrudescence of hope. 'Judging from the various reports, things must be going on well in production. It's good to hear of any lustre pots turning out well;' while he adds with undiminished enthusiasm: 'I have *endless* chemical problems for solution, which I have puzzled at since 1873.'

When the time came round once more for his annual migration to England, moreover, he wrote full of renewed vigour.

'LEVANTO, RIVIERA LIGURE,
'*Ap.* 30*th.*

'Our boat says it sails from Genoa at noon on Wednesday. We are here because we thought three or four days' holiday by the way would do us both good. We have hit on a place of most amazing loveliness, and a very good hotel. I am simply eating and sleeping and taking long walks—so I shall (I hope) be in a state of diabolical activity and aptitude when I arrive in London on the 10th or 11th. I shall need to be, for the task I propose to myself is no less than that of *forcing* the concern into a paying form. I am satisfied that we can do it, from the fact that it has done no worse than it has in these last shopless months. We shall see ! If we are to have a financial collapse outright, I hope it will bring itself home to us immediately—the sooner it happens the more time I shall have in England to get straight again.

'Meanwhile I hope to have credited the Bay of Biscay with the smallest possible investments on my part. *A rivederci!*'

But the summer which lay before him proved a yet more disheartening battle against overwhelming complications. The constant payments at an ever-increasing loss were a drain on his resources which absorbed all his available funds. Again and again comes the plaint: 'Our poor little factory is starved not for the lack of customers but of output. . . . The world would swallow up ten times our present output if we were in contact with it—*but we can't produce!*' For the difficulties with which he had to contend moved eternally in a vicious circle. To financial success, production on a large scale was first imperative, yet to produce on a large scale first necessitated financial prosperity. 'All one wants,' he wrote pithily, 'is cash to save cash. None can afford the luxury of economy but the capitalist.' Yet he adds as a sorry jest, 'I have no intention of leaving the concern till the concern leaves me—though I do not go as an asset with it!' The final retirement of Halsey Ricardo, the partnership with whom was dissolved in January, 1899, seemed to make inevitable its extinction. None the less, to abandon his life-work when, after years of arduous struggle, he had attained to an undreamed of artistic excellence, was to De Morgan a conclusion from which thought turned aside. In truth, it is pathetic to reflect that, at this crisis, his own powers were at their zenith—powers of invention and achievement, wrung out of the accumulated knowledge and labour of years. 'While the pottery failed financially,' wrote his wife later, 'the last pieces of lustre-ware he produced in the dying factory were the best he had ever done.'

Nevertheless, when some one ventured to condole with her on the incessant anxiety she was enduring, and further declaimed against the unsatisfactoriness of life in general, Evelyn parried the proffered sympathy in typical fashion. On a post card she wrote:—

'Look-a-here, Mary Anne,
You stop your complainin'.
I know that it's rainin'
As hard as it can.
But what are you gainin'?
Is't the Lord you are trainin'?
Well— He ain't explainin'
His reasons to Man!
'I find these lines very bracing!

'E. D. M.'

Once again a way of escape was opened out to De Morgan when the firm of Morris & Co. proposed to him that he should remain in England and give them the monopoly of his output; but apart from the state of his health, which precluded accept-

ance, to work on other than independent lines would have been unpalatable to him. And still he stubbornly refused to recognize defeat. 'R. and W.' he writes, 'both pelt me with proofs that I ought to wind up the concern, and not begin again. Possibly they are right; but I shall take my own course, and risk all consequences. All the misfortunes I have ever met with, I have afterwards found I should have avoided if I had relied on my own convictions. I'm afraid I'm almost too old now to profit much by the lesson—but better late than never . . . I hope the gods will provide!'

But the gods, according to their wont, were deaf or callous. With the autumn came the Boer War, bringing consequent depression to trade, and further adversely affecting a concern which was slowly bleeding to death. Drastic retrenchment became imperative; and the show-room in Great Marlborough Street was first given up, though this De Morgan did not regard as an unmitigated evil. 'How to get rid of G. M. S. without bad consequences,' he wrote cheerfully, 'except by change of premises, was always to me a problem:—

'For years I've longed for some
Excuse for this revulsion;
Now this excuse has come—
I do it on compulsion!'

But ere long ten hands had to be discharged from the factory, and the dismissal of men who had worked for him well and loyally throughout all the vicissitudes of his former career—who had followed him from Chelsea to Merton and from Merton to Fulham—always looking upon themselves as an integral part of a great whole, went nigh to breaking his heart. With his incurable optimism, however, he continued to regard present disaster as merely a phase from which the factory would eventually re-issue endowed with new life. 'It is melancholy,' he wrote, 'to think my men should be driving omnibuses. What I am curious to see is if, when any of them come back (if they do) they will be happy, and won't find it dull by comparison.' Yet an almost worse situation had to be faced in Italy when he found that he could not meet the arrears of wages and was forced to stop the work of the keen-witted, eager Italians who had laboured for him so happily in their rose-wreathed workshop. To a man like De Morgan who was generous to a fault and scrupulously punctilious in his payments, the knowledge that he was depriving men who had served him faithfully of their livelihood, and that he even owed them money, for the payment of which he depended upon uncertain supplies from England, filled him with acute distress. To Mr. Blunt he wrote sadly:—

'FLORENCE,
'*Oct.*, 1899.

'I have had to resort to a desperate measure to raise £5 for the chaps

here, lest they go dinnerless. I have written a cheque on my bank knowingly an overdraw. . . . I should think some cash must have come in [in London], though if it has, there will be very little left for the rest of the quarter. Our very existence hangs on the completion of the Bedford panels now, and this will scarcely tide us over Xmas. Who would be an Art potter?'

Nevertheless, his old fun bubbles up again:—

'Ewbank's account of sales is—

'"*Turnover this week has amounted to £———, making £——— only as yet, for the month.*"

'Of course, he *may* have forgotten to fill in the amounts!

'*October 29th.*

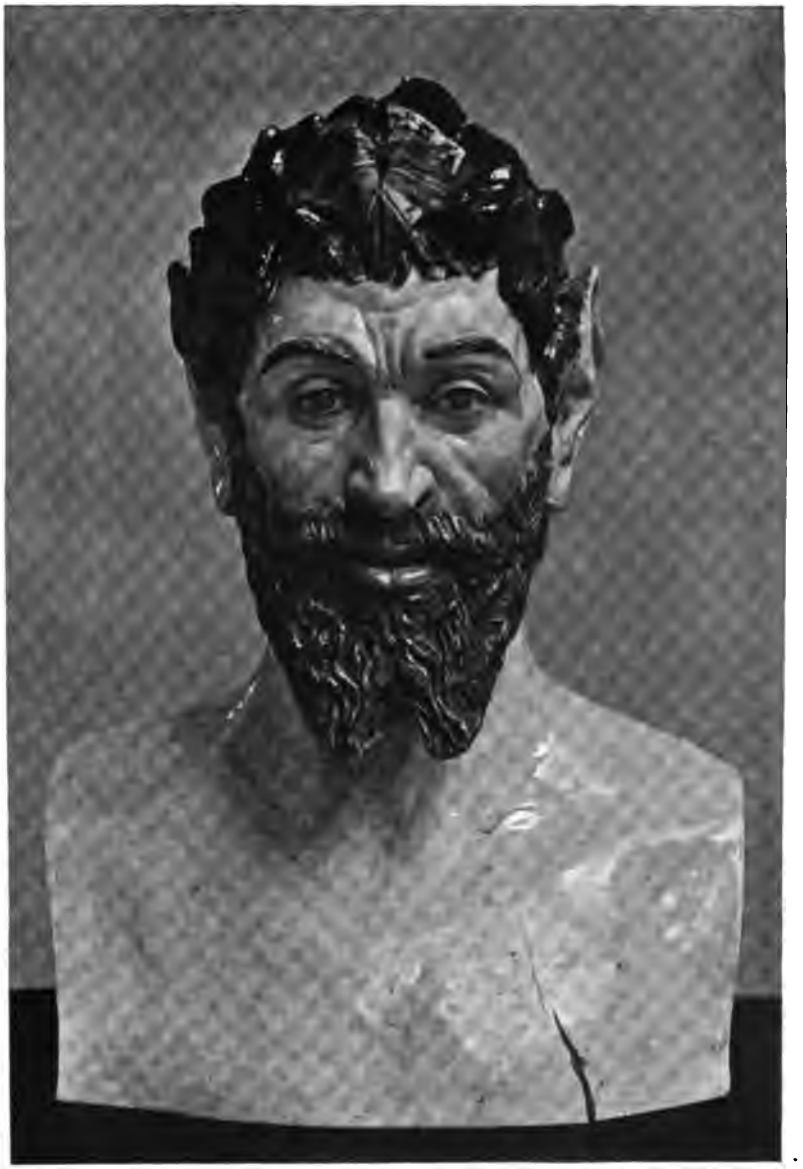
'Perhaps I ought not to have come away without winding up. But doing so would have meant sacrificing the Woburn panels altogether. . . . My only hope is that when the place is actually closed, the very fact may lead to some new possibilities. . . .

'I can't bring myself to believe in our final extinction—especially just at a time when the press is beginning to be mighty civil. I saw myself spoken of in print lately as "this renowned tile-maker." Bless us and save us!! who would be a renowned tile-maker after that?

'If the Woburn work tells well, and is really satisfactory, I have no doubt I can make a special application to the Duke, and he'll write a cheque without looking at his pass-book! All turns on that!'

With the cessation of his own ability to fire the pottery, De Morgan asked the firm of Cantagalli to complete some pieces at which he continued to work in desultory fashion.[1] Thus they painted for him a great vase of his design, the material employed being their own—a production which proved unusual in appearance. Although rich and deep in decoration, it is entirely unlike his more vivid work, the whole being painted in a minor key—possibly in harmony with the then depression of his mood—a scheme of purples, black and grey-blue. Another vase which bears the signature of both De Morgan and Cantagalli is a copy of the old Urbino, showing a design in pale relief of the infant Bacchus piping and dancing, with snakes entwined on a background of brilliant rose-pink lustre. A decoration of vine-leaves and grapes surmounts the whole, and the handles are fashioned out of twisted snakes the hue of lapis-lazuli. Besides this, Cantagalli fired certain pieces on which De Morgan experimented

[1] 'With regard to the Italian position of the factory,' wrote Evelyn De Morgan in 1917, 'I want to emphasize that there was no sort of connexion whatever with the De Morgan work in Italy and the Fabrica Cantagalli. Some time after Signor Cantagalli's death, my husband got them to paint a vase from his designs, also about four or five dishes, the materials employed being their own. These designs, executed by them for him, were not in any way connected with the output of their own firm, merely an order given to them by him. With regard to the experiments on a paraffin ground, the one successful plate was painted by him himself and he employed his own men on other attempts of the kind, but merely sent the dishes to be fired in the Cantagalli kiln—Cantagalli's people having no more part in the experiment than Doultons have when a sculptor sends his terra-cotta work to them to be fired.'



THE GOD PAN

WILLIAM DE MORGAN FECIT

In coloured pottery, with goat-ears and horns; crowned with a chaplet of ivy-leaves.
Height, 23 inches; width at base, 15 inches.
[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

with a ground prepared with paraffin, which he found gave a greater facility to the painter and enabled the colours to flow like oil. Four or five dishes were done for him in this method, some of which show mermaids with waving hair, or Neptune and his Queen disporting in sea-blue waves; and one which exhibits a fine design of the infant Achilles riding on Cheiron, but in which it is curious to note that the workmen of Cantagalli have reproduced the design with the bowstring on the wrong side of the Centaur's arm! To this period may also be assigned a huge head of the god Pan, in which the saturnine, mocking expression, and the penetrating eyes of pale blue, seem full of a sinister life. This was presumably modelled by Mrs. De Morgan, decorated by De Morgan, and fired by Cantagalli.

But even with this intermittent employment which kept his thoughts and fingers temporarily occupied, the depressing sense of the failure of his life-work could not be kept at bay. Christmas, spent as usual with the Spencer-Stanhopes at Villa Nuti, was darkened by the anxiety which was crushing him. This lay like a nightmare at the back of his mind, which the despondency engendered by the war served to accentuate.

'VILLA NUTI,
'*Xmas*, 1899.

'I am staying here for Xmas [he wrote to Mr. Blunt]—I have a card from you, but I suppose there really is nothing to tell and that the business is torpid. . . . There is nothing here to make Xmas any better than in London—indeed I should imagine that for us English it is worse. We are kept in a constant fever by false alarms, cooked up by a press which always has a glee in reporting news in a sense disadvantageous to us. Then the anxious, expectant faces of my men thrown out here, to whom I unfortunately owe money still which I can't pay, make an unpleasant incident. I am trying to get them some work in decoration, but it is only in the summer that much of this sort of work is going about. . . .

'I am hoping to have from you a general statement of how we stand. Anyhow I wish you a Xmas not further clouded than we are at this moment of writing, and even perhaps with a silver lining creeping round the cloud's corner.

"11*th*, 1900.

'As I understand matters now, we (the business) have just enough owing to us to carry through till Lady-day on the reduced scale. If I diminish this by 50 now, either I shall have to find another 50 by March or we shall have to close the factory. Well—what must be must! Anyhow, if I cannot have 50, it is clear we *are* stopped. Just look at the Italian account—it's awful!

'Nevertheless, the strategy is all to hold on, although the field tactics all point to surrender. . . . But for the moment I am owing money to the men here still (about £20) and have nothing to live on, so that 50 is a *sine qua non*, though it isn't a *cum qua multum*.

'The chaps here are languidly at work on K.L. with blue background, which I have told them I may not be able to buy of them; and are harder at work on wall-stencil patterns. I am hoping to get them decorative work to do, and this will be a great convenience because I shall be able to get tile-work done when wanted, by special job, not have to keep them all going always. I wish something of the kind were more possible in

England—if only the chaps could groce greens, or mongue iron, or victual licentiously, while employing odd hours on painting.

'*Feb. 8th*, 1900.

'If the pottery is finally strangled by the Boers, I shall have to take to something else permanently—but this will be compulsion, not choice.

'*Feb. 9th.*

'The cheque has arrived—and I'm delighted. For I had exactly ten cents in the world, and two more halfpenny papers would have reduced me to beggary!'

By January, 1903, we find him writing: 'I have had to close at Fulham temporarily (and the *tempus* may be a long one), as the wages must stop until our arrears are got the better of. . . . Of course it's not a cheerful way of conducting business. . . . If I were in London it would all be different—but then I'm not.' At the end of 1904 he wrote to Mackail:—

VIA LUNGO IL MUGNONE, NO. 19, FLORENCE.

'DEAR JACK,—

'Please return me a true Bill for that—I am gradually breaking in all Florence to call me by that name—and hope to be universally accepted as such before I fall due.

'But it is not of that I am going for to sing—but of an inquiry ascribed to you by Mary about the valuable original drawings of tiles and things that an unfortunate misconception of my powers has betrayed me into making during the whole of the present century and a quarter of last. These are mostly assets of D.M. and Co., in liquidation; and that Firm's Mr. De Morgan wants to have them himself. He intends to resume manufacture as soon as ever he sees his way to replacing the capital that has been withdrawn from the Fulham turn-out. If D. M. and Co., to whom they belong, decide to offer these splendid productions to a grateful Nation, I shall raise no objection. But the half of the Firm now in Florence says she won't agree to give up anything that will contribute to a re-animation of the concern, and is leaving most of her capital in until we return, to keep the life in it till better may be. You see she is Cer*amicably* disposed towards it.

'Seriously, the things have no value, and if there were no chance of their being used again, I am sure all who are concerned would raise no objection to their being made a bundle of and sent to the Department, to use as a warning or an example as might seem best. But four or five of my old workmen are keeping things together on a sort of co-operative system till my return in the Spring gives reconstruction a chance.'

For a space the reconstructed factory dragged on a precarious existence with De Morgan, Iles and Fred Passenger as co-partners; then Fate dealt the final blow. 'The last shell was pitched into the works,' relates De Morgan with the reticence of tragedy, 'when neuritis gripped my business thumb and stopped my drawing. I threw Art aside after forty odd years.' In 1905 he wrote: 'My old joke with Morris about the Fictionary which became a Factory is now reversed. *Sic transit!*'

In a later letter he pronounced a final *requiescat in pace* over the hopes and ambitions of so many years: 'My former works,' he says, with a gentle irony, 'are now the source of that far more useful stuff, Blue-Bell Polish!'

* * * * *

Thus ended De Morgan's career as a Potter. When, however, his own connexion ceased with the manufacture of the ware which bore his name, he still allowed his men to continue working at his designs, by his methods. 'A good many pots,' he wrote as late as 1914, 'decorated from the same drawings, by the same painters and fired in the same way, have been done of late years, but on a Staffordshire ground.' These—which may be termed posthumous works of the De Morgan factory—have, however, for the most part, a hardness of glaze and a lack of elasticity in the interpretation of the designs apparent to those who have studied the original ware executed under the hand and eye of the master; and it is to be regretted from an artistic standpoint that, with a generosity which scorned any monopoly of his discoveries or his designs, De Morgan countenanced the production of work which, as far as his personal association with it is concerned, may be termed spurious. He took the precaution, indeed, to write to his former manager, Ewbank, as follows:

'*March 14th*, 1911.

'No signature must appear on the ware that can possibly mislead any purchaser as to its origin. Otherwise I should like it to have the full advantage of the fact that it is executed by the same men, and has my cordial wishes for its success. All legitimate advantage would be got by a *Ewbank, Iles and Passenger* stamp.'

Nevertheless, a confusion has not unnaturally arisen at times between the original and the posthumous De Morgan pottery, and therefore it may be as well to append some of the distinctive marks belonging to the different periods of its manufacture, though these were utilised principally in connexion with the tiles.

Dates, locality of manufacture and distinguishing marks of De Morgan tiles:—

Cheyne Row and Orange House, Chelsea. 1872–1881	At this period De Morgan was not making his own biscuit: Sign, bars at the back of the tiles.
Merton Abbey. 1881–1888.	Sign *De Morgan*, in a lozenge, or an illustration of the Abbey in which W. D. M. carries on the M. of the Merton. It reads like W. De Merton Abbey.
Sands End, De Morgan Road, Fulham. 1888–1899	Name written round a Tudor rose with five petals—Wm. De Morgan & Co., Sands End Pottery, Fulham. After the partnership was dissolved signed De M.1898—not in a lozenge but in a circle. He added the so-called tulip mark given in Chaffers.
In partnership with Iles and Passenger. 1899–1905	D.[.P. During this period he built a gas furnace instead of coke.

1905. De Morgan's connexion with the manufacture ceased. Iles and Passenger subsequently decorated and refired some pottery in W. De Morgan's designs; marks C.P. & F.P.

Nevertheless, out of the extinct factory arose a monument to its memory which, as such, may be regarded as a National asset.

Mention has been made before of the fact that De Morgan had successfully manufactured tiles which would stand exposure to the vagaries of a changeable climate. At the date when his connexion with the pottery came to an end, Halsey Ricardo was employed in constructing a house for Mr. Debenham in Addison Road, which he intended should represent two achievements—firstly, a building immune from the destructive effects of a city atmosphere, and secondly the inauguration of an architecture to be expressed in forms of colour. Out of the derelict factory he therefore selected a mass of the finest tiles by De Morgan, and employed these both externally and internally, from basement to roof, in the decoration of this house.

The result is a structure, the striking exterior of which is surpassed by the wonderful colour-scheme within. A long and picturesque entrance-loggia, with columns of granite, tiled in rich blue-green, and terminating in a lunette of flying cranes, leads to a dwelling, the walls of which are lined with tiles in the same peacock colouring, and with panels, friezes, and lunettes of rich and elaborate design. Passages and archways show a vista of gorgeous hue like some magic Eastern Palace of Dreams. In the centre rises a hall roofed in by a glittering dome of mosaics; archways and pendentives of gold mosaic throw into bold relief the rich oriental tint of the walls and the frescoes. In the corridors beyond, duplicates of the vanished ships' panels may be seen, great eagles and birds of prey, strange fancies in beast life, rare designs in trailing leaf and glinting foliage. Moreover, against the prevailing brilliance of the background, here and there stand great cabinets full of age-old pottery from Persia and Asia Minor which shine with a mysterious pearly radiance produced by long burial in the earth. And it is interesting to note how these gems of ancient Art are in harmony with their surroundings and are seen thus in their rightful setting, enhanced by the work of a potter who, separated from the ancient craftsmen by the passing of centuries, is yet linked with them in a community of ideas.

Further, throughout the house, there are tiled fireplaces of unusual construction, ornamented by rare marbles which blend or contrast happily with each separate colour-scheme. One mantelpiece and sides show the grey pink of the copper lustres; one is all blue with a delicate atmospheric effect; another is planned with ships in red lustre alternating with a decoration which represents a shimmering red bough; yet another exhibits raised flowers in orange, shading to a translucent pink. Again, where appropriate, in the bathrooms and the neighbourhood of the nurseries, some of the walls are tiled solely with the grotesque birds and animals in the invention of which De Morgan was a past-master and which for all time are unique—for while the

MARKS ON DE MORGAN POTTERY

Nos. 1 to 3—Marks used at Merton Abbey; 4 to 7—Early Fulham period; 8 to 10—After Mr. Halsey Ricardo's separation from the firm.

(*During the Chelsea period there were occasional variants*)

A RELIEF PANEL

Bequeathed by Evelyn De Morgan to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

It represents the infant Bacchus carrying the Horn of Plenty and surrounded by an elaborate design of grapes and vine-leaves. It is the only bit of pottery which De Morgan designed, modelled and fired personally.

future may produce imitators of De Morgan ware in colour and process, no brain will ever emulate the peculiarly individual character of his rare and delicate humour.

Thus Phœnix-like out of the dead factory rose this structure commemorative of its existence and encircled by a lovely garden where loggias, pavilions and fountain-tanks again reflect in the pale English sunshine the glowing richness of the blue-and-green oriental colour-scheme. And so it is in life, that out of what seems failure often arises a permanent and unforeseen result; for this house which, like some Aladdin's palace, has sprung up amid incongruous surroundings, stands to-day a monument to the creative power of two men—the architect who designed it and the potter whose best life-work it preserves and enshrines for posterity.

'I have had no orders for Tuileries Palaces yet,' wrote Ricardo to De Morgan, sending him the *Journal of Architecture*, in which illustrations of the house were reproduced; and De Morgan replied:—

'FLORENCE,
'*March 21st*, 1907.

'It's really a pleasure to write to you with no damn business in it! This time only thanks for the shiny-paged journal, with the really wonderful pictures of THE HOUSE in it. It *is* a beautiful palace—there's no doubt of it.

'But Millionaires aren't half millionaires not to say at once "Let's build a city that-wise, forthwith!" Not a mere house but a town of houses—and plant all the gardens forthwith, straight-away, to be ready when the houses are finishing fifty years hence.

'I don't much care for the figure a-top of the dome—seems to me to want *impersonality*—is that intelligible, or otherwise?

'I hope you overstated the non-existence of orders for new houses—of course over-statement is cut off at a limit in this case. Well! I hope what you said was short of the limit.

'Them's my ideas about the house.'

Nevertheless, to the artist, happiness lies not in fruition but in endeavour; and so to De Morgan the enforced cessation of his work remained fraught with an indescribable bitterness. 'All my life I have been trying to make beautiful things, and now that I can make them nobody wants them!' he said once in a mood of dire despondency; 'Only my own extinction can make them valuable!' Yet this, the saddest cry of Art crippled by commercial considerations, is a lament as old as civilization itself. Of all those lovers of beauty who to-day would give fancy prices for De Morgan ware, there was not one to come forward to enable the creator to create while life still inspired the glowing fancy and ingenious brain. But Man's primitive custom of deifying the dead still survives; and only when Death, by putting a period to production, has at last set a mercantile value upon a work of art, does it obtain due recognition from an appreciative public.

CHAPTER X

JOSEPH VANCE

1905–1906

WITH the cessation of the work which had been the mainspring of so many years, Life had lost its savour for De Morgan, and only the belief sustained him that the dead factory would some day be revivified into a successful existence. 'That is the hope I live in,' he wrote.

To add to the sadness of this time, two of his oldest friends had passed from him. In 1896 William Morris had ended his brilliant career after a period of protracted suffering, during which Mary De Morgan had been among those who ministered to his darkened hours. And dying thus slowly, when scarcely past the fulness of a splendid manhood, the poet-artist had breathed a gallant farewell to existence—'I have had a beautiful life, and I'm glad of it.' But to De Morgan it seemed impossible to believe that that companion of so many years—that vivid personality with the spacious genius and the fiery energy—had drifted into the great Silence. Two years later Burne-Jones, still working with undiminished power upon one of his finest conceptions, had been snatched away abruptly in mortal agony. And when De Morgan saw his wonderful 'Avalon,' there were still upon it the chalk marks indicating the work which the dead painter had intended to do on that morrow which never came.

Later, out in Florence, the *Biography of William Morris* stirred in De Morgan many memories, and filled him with admiration for the matter and the manner of it.

William De Morgan to J. W. Mackail.

'CHELSEA,
'*May 24th*, '99.

'I must unburden my mind of an accumulation of suppressed praise of the Biography. It goes on growing and growing as I read. And now I have read all but all of it—and much two or three times over—and I have a right to say how well done I think it.

'For indeed you *have* done well, and that's the sacred truth. And you have done well where there was so much room for failure—such a-many opportunities for doing it ill!

'How I pity you through all the months of responsibility—it must

have been fearful!—and how I congratulate you upon having got through it so well—if there is a hitch or a fault anywhere, *I* have not found it out.

'What has delighted me particularly has been the way you have written in detail about his poetry. It was difficult (wasn't it?) to do it justice without seeming to overflow into blind praise. Anyhow I shall always say of you what is reported to have been said by a Scotch gentleman, "He's a vara sensible mon—he agrees wi' maist of my opeenions." Please think me a vara sensible mon on the same grounds, at any rate as far as Morris's poetry goes.

'I shall read that book very often, I know, and always thank you for it. Evelyn endorses me all round.'

A few years later news came to De Morgan of the passing of another of the giant intellects of his generation—George Frederick Watts, R.A., the kindly 'Signor' of many happy recollections. During the last years of active life, while Watts was still working at his great statue of Physical Energy, it had been an arresting sight to see the spare, ethereal figure of the sculptor beside his powerful creation, the strong brain still dominating the weak body—frail old Age creating immortal Youth. 'My gratitude is great indeed to Signor,' De Morgan wrote to Mrs. Watts, 'both for his Art and its teaching. All will lay stress on the latter who suspect, as I do, that the death of a man is the birth of a soul—I suppose we shall know all about it before very long—all of us!'

That same year, 1904, came out the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, written by his wife; and again De Morgan, living in the Past, wrote to Mackail: 'Do you know it is a long, long time since anything has given me such unmixed pleasure as the *Life*—certainly nothing in the same line since yours of Morris—what I feel and hear said by others is that the beauty of the workmanship will attract and engross those who never realized anything of its subject at all during his life—in fact, that it will bring in outsiders. What very short ways there are of saying things—if one could only pitch on them at the first go off! Anyhow, the book is a delightful book, and that not only for me because of my old memories, but for what a thoughtful man of my acquaintance calls "our contemporaries of the Future." I shall write an effusion to the author when I've done the 2nd vol.—if ever my present wife lets me have it to finish.'

In answer to appreciative letters from both husband and wife Lady Burne-Jones wrote with the charm which characterized her correspondence:—

Lady Burne-Jones to Mrs. De Morgan.

'*Jan. 19th*, 1905.

'MY DEAR EVELYN,—

'How kind of you to write me the warm-hearted note that came this morning! I do value the sympathy of my friends so very much and am comforted by it beyond words. Thank you, my dear, for what you

say. So many have told me that they hear the voice again and find passed days brought back by the Memorials—which is what I wanted—and the evident interest and importance of the men and the time dealt with, to strangers, has been beyond my expectation.

'Have you seen Arthur Hughes's illustrations to a child's book called *Babies' Classics*? it is very lovely and shows him to be no day older than when he did *Sing-song*, bless him! Ah, my dear, it is not fairy gold that we have been laying up, the reality of those treasures never fails for a minute.

'Yes, I hope in course of time, Mr. Rooke will give us a book of conversations and recollections. I have often compared him to Eckermann in my mind.

'We had a good Christmas, all the children and grand-children were here, and the name we love was often spoken.

'Sometimes I dream of coming out to Florence and going on to Venice—I wonder if it will ever come true!'

Lady Burne-Jones to William De Morgan.

'ROTTINGDEAN, SUSSEX,
'*Feb. 15th*, 1905.

'MY DEAR WILLIAM,—

'Having answered other letters of less intimate friends—you understand that!—I turn gladly to your patiently waiting pages.

'The words you picked out to say about the Memorials could not be matched for their comfort, and that you and other friends whose knowledge and judgment I value have said the same thing, is my daily help and strength. I realize now the difficulty and danger of my attempt as I did not beforehand—how could I? The profound interest of the thing swallowed up all fear. I am greatly pleased by the eagerness and seriousness with which the story has been received by the papers as a rule; I feel as if the publication had been *timely* which is so important a thing, and that the lives and work of those wonderful men have already begun to work like leaven.

'How glad I am of what you say about the talks with Dr. Evans;[1] they give me great joy, and I recognize their truth, though of course Edward never talked to me in that particular way.

'Crom Price, too, hailed them as reminding him of the fiery Oxford days. Yes, "Sebastian" was a great gift in those later years. You would like him much. He has been to see me two or three times down here, and will come again I hope before the Summer, for I value his friendship, deeply.

'You may trust in your version of Rossetti's Crom poem[2] being the wrong one, whoever gave it you. I had mine from Ned, and often heard it chanted by him. I ask you as a friend how a "dead dog" can "trickle" from Crom's or any other pocket—and then I leave the subject with you.'

Meanwhile De Morgan, bereft of what had been the aim and occupation of so many years, pondered vaguely how to fill the

[1] The remarkable conversation on life and consciousness which Edward Burne-Jones held with Dr. Sebastian Evans. See *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, Vol. II, pp. 251–257.

[2] A Limerick composed by Rossetti as follows:—

There was a young doctor named Crom
Whom you'll get very little good from.
If his pockets you jog,
The inside of a dog
Is certain to trickle from Crom.

SAINT CHRISTINA GIVING HER F

Painted by Evelyn De Morgan in Italy, in 1904, and brought over from Flore
purchased by Mrs. Stirling.

THER'S JEWELS TO THE POOR
ıce just before the Great War. Sold for the benefit of the blinded soldiers, and

empty days, and thought of writing a History of Pottery. Then, in the guise of an incident of small importance, came the event which was to change the current of his life.

Some time before, in 1901, during a spare hour, he had written two chapters of a novel, 'just to see what I could do,' he explained subsequently; 'I always loved grubby little boys, and I thought I should like to write a story of a grubby little boy. I began and got interested in him. But when I read over what I had written, I was so little impressed with the result that I nearly burnt it; in any case I put it away in a drawer and forgot all about it. Later in the year, when we were going out to Florence, it accidentally came with us among a great mass of business papers.' Turning out these papers some time afterwards, he tossed the despised manuscript with a heap of rubbish into the waste-paper basket, where by chance his wife saw it, and glanced casually at it before consigning it to the flames. The story, with its graphic, sordid realism, at once gripped her attention; she set it carefully aside and awaited her opportunity.

Shortly afterwards De Morgan was ill in bed, suffering ostensibly from influenza, but principally from the unwonted idleness which filled him with depression and sapped his vitality. Evelyn took the piece of manuscript to him and laid it by his bedside, with a pencil temptingly adjacent. 'I think something might be made of this,' she said briefly. When she looked in softly half an hour later he had started on the occupation which he was never again to abandon, and was writing rapidly.

By and by she discovered that, somewhat characteristically, when she provided him with the pencil, she had omitted to supply any paper. As a result he had written the continuation of *Joseph Vance* in the washing-book which happened to be handy, and when that was full, unable to arrest the rapidity of his flying pen, he had covered the backs of advertisements, torn envelopes, and scraps of paper which were within his reach with the continuation of the story, so that afterwards it was with difficulty that she pieced the disjointed fragments together into a consecutive whole.

At first he did not treat his new occupation seriously. 'My book,' he explained later, 'was written in the serenest independence an author can enjoy, to wit, a total disbelief in ultimate publication. I never considered the feelings of my reader for a moment—nor his eyesight!' He told his story in the leisurely, discursive, colloquial fashion in which he transcribed letters to a friend. He wrote as he saw, as he felt, as he *knew*—unhampered by the fear of little gods or Great Men—press, publishers or public; and thus, as ideas begotten of the heterogeneous experience of years poured from his brain, moulded into fiction, the keynote of his work was a great sincerity.

'The original idea of this novel as it first came to me,' he explained subsequently, 'was a story supposed to be told to me by an old man dying in the workhouse. It was the history of his own life, and on its bare material side was that of Joseph Vance. There was, however, no sentiment in it of any kind; no humour, no brightness anywhere. My imaginary old man was, naturally enough, fearfully depressed and melancholy, and his narrative, or rather what seemed to me, his *facts* as they stood, were too unutterably sad for any picturesque form of reproduction. But gradually the story took the bit into its teeth and twisted into what I never intended. I found the task a very pleasant one; and when Lossie came into it, I began to get deeply interested.'

As it stands to-day, the tale is almost too well known to need recapitulation. Presented in the form of an autobiography, Joseph Vance, the fictitious writer, holds the chief place throughout. His father, Christopher Vance, was a workman, given to drink. In consequence of this failing, he lost his job; and while ruffled in temper at this untoward result, he became involved in a public-house brawl with a sweep, Peter Gunn, who fought with a genius peculiar to himself, by butting his opponent with his cranium, a weapon as deadly as it was adamantine. Christopher, considerably damaged by this treatment, was removed to the hospital; while his small son, from a safe place of concealment, avenged his father's wrongs by successfully shying a broken bottle at the sweep, whom he thus triumphantly blinded in one eye.

When Christopher returned to the world, temporarily chastened in mind and body, he, by mere chance, purchased from a pedlar a board which bore the legend: '*C. Dance, Builder. Repairs, Drains promptly attended to.*' A little manipulating altered the 'D' into a 'V,' and the announcement thus bearing his own name, he placed it above his door. As though there had been magic in it, all the neighbourhood became convinced that it had been there for years; and custom came to its owner. Vance got rich, owing primarily to his astute understanding of human nature, and his grand, unalterable principle of 'never doing anything with his own hands.' By and by he had Works of his own, and moved into a larger house; but he remained true to his type and to his original character, even to the end when, in consequence of one of his periodical lapses into drunken habits, he burnt down his premises, and having omitted to pay up his insurance, would have fallen once more into poverty, but for his foresight in having provided his second wife with a valuable diamond 'Tiarrhoea' which the creditors could not touch. Vance is an extraordinarily clever presentment of the British workman of a former generation, with his grit, his shrewdness,

his endearing good-heartedness, and his vigorous common sense, so that he remains delightful to the last despite his blatant vulgarity of speech and his palpable failings. The portraits of his two wives—particularly the second, Miss Seraphina Dowdswell, more commonly called Pheener, are equally and humorously true to class, and unalterably consistent.

Throughout the waxing and the waning of Christopher's fortunes, his son Joseph is seen, first as a delightful child with a passion for mathematics which procures him a nomination for a good school from his father's earliest employer, Dr. Thorpe; then at Oxford; then in London, where he becomes a partner in an engineering business. And meantime the sustained interest in his career lies not in any dramatic incident, which would mar the realism, but in the gradual development of his character and the unwavering charm of his personality; in his association with his friends and particularly in his attitude towards the two women who prominently affect his life. The first of these, Lossie Thorpe, is an exquisitely drawn figure, who, to the small Joseph in his boyhood, is a species of divinity. When in the dawn of a lovely womanhood, she marries an Indian soldier, poor Joe discovers that he has all along been deeply in love with her, and she remains the lodestar of his saddened days. 'There was no real Lossie!' De Morgan said afterwards when questioned as to her origin; 'but she came to me in the book as though she belonged there. She really seemed to step out into my literary life, just as the girl in the story did into Joseph Vance's.' Yet the second woman, Janey, who becomes Joe's wife when the early glamour of this boyish romance has faded into a pained remembrance, is the more subtly drawn character of the two. From her first appearance, when she drifts into Joe's life and heart so quietly that he scarcely recognizes her influence, till the last all-too-tragic moment when they were both battling in the sea after a shipwreck and she drifts away from him for ever, she is one of the most remarkable pieces of characterization in the book.

In the latter part of the story, Joe, all alone in the world, takes upon himself the blame of another man's crime, the distasteful decadent Beppino, an unworthy son of a delightful father, Dr. Thorpe; and in order to spare Lossie the knowledge of her brother's true nature, he is content to live under a cloud during a long exile in South America. The last chapters are full of the poignant tragedy of advancing age and profound loneliness; nevertheless, it ends happily, on the note of the romance which has been sustained throughout.

Such is the bald outline of the story, without the light and shade, or the manifold subtleties which made of it a human document. In 1904 De Morgan wrote facetiously to Mackail

'I am nearing the end of Joe—he tells lies, but the supreme skill of the author justifies them!' By and by he sent a portion of the voluminous manuscript to a friend in London, Mrs. Dowson (now Mrs. Hugh Woolner), who had started a type-writing office. 'After Manuscripture comes the type,' he wrote, 'and one has to be careful of the type—like Nature—or what she ought to have been. In fact, I expect my brain will be softening with revision later. I shall hope, however, for "Good news from Ghent" to soothe the head Aix I shall be suffering from. I can't help thinking this is a pun!'

One result of the typing provided encouragement. The girl to whom it was entrusted by Mrs. Dowson was discovered dissolved in tears, and on being questioned respecting the cause of her grief, she admitted that her feelings had been so powerfully worked upon by Janey's death in the story, that she could not get on with her work. Later, De Morgan, sending the rest of the MS., wrote genially: 'You will be sorry to hear of the death of Dr. Thorpe. But don't let anyone fret—he died quite painlessly—I killed him in a minute!'

At length there came out to Florence the first criticism of the novel from Lady Burne-Jones:—

'I am delighted that you have written us a Tale, and long to see it in book shape. I read some inspiriting pages of it at Margaret's, and liked it *very* much in spite of its being in the dead letter of "typing," and what is more, it impressed me as the beginning of a series of life-giving stories. I'm sure if you only lay the reins on the neck of your pen it will carry you swiftly over enchanted ground and be for the happiness of us and those who come after us. Do go on now with it as the business of your life. What a nice stock-in-trade is an inkpot and pen and paper.'

Still De Morgan had no thought of publishing his work, but his wife wrote privately to Mr. Shaw-Sparrow, 'My husband has committed a crime—in other words he has written a novel. The book is, to my thinking, remarkably successful' . . . and in extenuation of her possible partiality she explained, 'Our friend Mr. Mackail, who has read the first half, pronounced it a mixture of Dickens and du Maurier, with an individual style of its own, so, perhaps, after all, my judgment may not be far out.' Later, De Morgan supplemented this letter in obvious surprise at his own temerity:—

'*Jan. 29th*, 1905.

'My wife tells me you will kindly take charge of this little story of mine—it is rather longer than *Vanity Fair!* at present!

'It has been the main employment of a year that I have scarcely been able to use otherwise owing to abominable neuritis in the hand; at any rate this scribbling keeps me quiet and prevents my being sulky—whether others than my personal friends who have read it will be amused by it remains to be seen. I am curious to see the result of the experiment.

'Three huge parcels of type-written stuff go off to you to-day—the bulk is appalling!'

About this time Bernard Shaw's play 'You never can tell' was running. To this De Morgan went, and after the performance he observed with an air of amusement: 'Really—"You never *can* tell"—perhaps some day I shall blossom into a fully-fledged author!' This vision, however, was quickly dispelled. Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, to whom the manuscript had been sent, promptly returned it with a rejection couched in sufficiently scathing terms. The length of the MS., it was pointed out, made publication impossible to contemplate, but even if reduced to half its then length, the work was unlikely to be otherwise than a failure. Mr. Shaw-Sparrow also wrote to De Morgan to explain more fully the grounds of rejection; and in view of after events, the letter is amusing:—

'The first three or four chapters caused the "reader" to believe that the book was a find, and he still thinks that Mr. De Morgan will hit the mark throughout a humorous, Barry-Paine-like book, having a story. The humorous books now passing out of vogue have no story. Messrs. H. & S. would welcome a love-story written with humour. The present book, they tell me, is much too long, and too much in the round-about style fashionable in Thackeray's time.'

De Morgan accepted the verdict as final, and unable to turn *Joseph Vance* into a 'humorous Barry-Paine-like book,' he put the condemned manuscript away out of sight. Nevertheless, bitten with the fascination of writing, he was already hard at work on another story. . . . 'I was half-way through *Alice-for-Short*,' he wrote later, 'while Joe still lay in a drawer awaiting his Heinemann!' In June, 1905, however, we find him remarking: 'I don't want to begin a third novel before I have got some idea what will become of it. I am getting on with my second rapidly!' In the interim, a visitor to Florence inserted in a diary:—

'I went to call on the De Morgans; both are working from dawn to dark—he writing, she painting glorious pictures. The novels don't get published, and the pictures don't get exhibited; but both author and artist seem supremely happy!'

Meanwhile Mrs. Dowson had unearthed a copy of *Joseph Vance* from its temporary tomb, and had sent it to Mr. Lawrence, of the firm of Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen. But as the subsequent silence lengthened, De Morgan wrote resignedly: 'It may be they are delaying a positive negative on the chance of its changing to a hesitating positive! It seems to me that it is quite possible that a publisher may often hesitate from courtesy to say, "*Do take your beastly MS. away and don't bother me to read it*," when all the while he would command the author's esteem and sympathy by a Johnsonian expression of opinion. Or in this case he may be hesitating to say he will *think about it* if it is cut down to 25,000 words. I believe it is 250,000!'

The date for the annual migration to London arrived while the fate of *Joe* still hung in the balance. De Morgan, as usual, travelled by sea, and throughout the voyage he sat on deck playing chess, at which he was an adept, with a fellow-passenger, a Chinaman, whom he had discovered to be as insatiable a devotee of the game as himself. The Chinaman could not speak a word of English, and De Morgan could not speak a word of Chinese, so at the close of each game the two antagonists rose, bowed solemnly to each other, and then in silence resumed their pastime.

In England the usual fate of absentees awaited De Morgan and his wife—an immediate necessity for procuring servants and a difficulty in securing even the most inefficient. Art and Literature alike had to be cast aside before the pressing need of the moment. 'I have been longing to ask you to talk about things,' De Morgan wrote to Mrs. Dowson, 'but our Household has bolted, or drinks; and this blessed day I have been making the beds and answering the bell, and emptying the slops—Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners!' On July 4, 1905, Evelyn wrote tragically to Mrs. Holiday:—

'We have been back a weary month, nothing but drunken cooks tumbling about like ninepins, no studies, no work, no peace, stodgy British incapacity at every turn, soaked in beer.

'We have reached a sort of demi-semi haven in the shape of a very stout lady who eats till her eyes start out of her head, and rolls sleepily about the house, yet it is bliss compared to the beery ones of the past few weeks; but the standard is lowered and we are very humble indeed now, and grateful for such very small mercies.

'We must have a good long talk soon. Have you read that story of the doctor who tells how he all but died, got nearly quite free of his body, and went out into the street?'

But even the 'demi-semi haven' soon surpassed the example of her predecessors; and drastic measures became necessary to ensure domestic peace. Evelyn having observed that the delinquent always got tipsy if she went out for a holiday but remained sober so long as she stayed indoors, attempted a cure by keeping her in the house till she showed signs of permanent amendment. During the time of probation her conduct was so satisfactory that at last permission could no longer be withheld for her to go out, though a solemn promise was first demanded from her that she would not touch any drink. Vows of total abstinence having been thus extracted, the stout lady departed; but alas! at the time appointed for her return, she did not reappear, and Evelyn having sat up waiting anxiously till a late hour, at length beheld her approaching in the condition anticipated. The culprit tottered into the hall, and subsiding into the nearest chair, rolled a beery eye on Evelyn and murmured dramatically, 'It'sh not *drink*—it'sh *worry*!'

The following day Evelyn had a visit from Lady Burne-Jones, to whom she related the episode; and Lady Burne-Jones, in order that she might remember to hand it on to her family in its pristine funniness, made a note of it on her visiting-card. On her way home, however, she went on to the Army and Navy Stores, and in the hubbub of a crowded department failed to make the attendant hear her name and address. She therefore handed her visiting-card to him, and was surprised to see him suddenly turn crimson and dive abruptly behind the counter, till, glancing at the card she had laid before him, she saw—

LADY BURNE-JONES

It'sh not *drink*—it'sh *worry*.

In the midst of these prosaic afflictions, on July 5, 1905, De Morgan, to his astonishment, received the following letter:—

W. Lawrence to William De Morgan.

'DEAR SIR,—

'I have very nearly finished *Joe Vance*. The book is too long, and yet I wish it were twice the length.

'If I had plenty of money I would publish it without hesitation, so pray do not let it ever be said that the book passed through my hands and I refused it.

'It must be published by one of the great firms who can afford to advertise it properly for its understanding. After the Marie Corellis and Hall Caines it is like a breath of pure sea air. Whether the public are so soaked with bad English and melodramatic twaddle that they will refuse Joe, I cannot say, but if they don't fall in love with the Doctor and Lossie and forgive Joe for all his faults they must be either fools or knaves, or both. I should very much like to have a talk with you about the whole matter. . . .'

That same day De Morgan replied in some amazement: 'I cannot tell you how pleased I am at the receipt of your letter—only—am I awake or dreaming?—that seems to me the first point to settle. . . . However, awake or asleep, thank you cordially for your appreciation, and thank you still more for your more than appreciation—if, as misgiving tells me, that is how to describe it. . . . However, if I don't wake up and find a letter saying "please send for your slow and unnatural MS.," I shall try to keep asleep till after I have seen you, for the pleasure of the visit!'

The following day Lawrence wrote:—

'I finished *Joe* last night and then began to read him again. I don't want to raise your spirits too much so I may tell you that, in the main, I have been uniformly unsuccessful in the novels I have liked well. Your

book appeals to me more than any I have ever read in MS.—ergo it will be most unsuccessful.

'My opinion is of no value whatever—save in its honesty.'

'I shall not allow myself to be depressed by the circumstance you mention,' replied De Morgan, who seemed to regard his present venture much in the same light as his former scientific experiments; 'chiefly I am curious to see what *Joe* will do if he is put in the water to swim for himself! I shall be greatly delighted if he reversed your experience—anyhow shall hope we may talk out a way of putting it to the test.'

The upshot of the interview which followed was that Mr. Lawrence carried off the manuscript and, as he afterwards described, staggered with his heavy load into Mr. Heinemann's office, where he deposited it in front of the publisher—a solid block of thin type-written sheets which stood about a foot and a half in height. Thereupon the following terse conversation took place.

Mr. Lawrence (firmly). 'Here is what seems to me a most remarkable book. You have got to read it!'

Mr. Heinemann (aghast). 'That I'll be d—— if I do!'

Nevertheless the manuscript was read and recognized as a masterpiece; and ere long Mr. Heinemann himself was on his way across the Atlantic with early proofs. The publication of *Joe* in England and America was decided upon; and when the date once more came round for De Morgan's return to Florence, he wrote to his first critic, Lady Burne-Jones, full of amusement at the novelty of the situation in which he found himself.

William De Morgan to Lady Burne-Jones.

'26 *Oct.*, 1905.

'DEAR GEORGIE,—

'We are off on Wednesday—which is the same as Tuesday, all but. Sunday afternoon we have to stay at home to show pictures to some friends while they talk to one another on current topics.

'We shall be horribly sorry to miss seeing you if it must be so. But we shall try to prevent it by seizing whatever chance offers. . . . It must be that way, for you may fancy how pushed we are at the last.

'Matters are complicated by the fact that our Household is to marry a sculptor on the morning we depart!! Consider the fiancées of the field that cook not, neither do they lay the cloth.

'Yes, *Joe* is being set up in America and his author is ditto ditto in London—seeing what a good opinion his Publisher's autumn announcements have of him!—He means to be immortal as long as he can—then will come the book. . . .

'So Mrs. Beatty[1] is gone—one more Chelsea memory—we are getting fewer—but it's all right, I'm confident.

'We shall try to occur—always

'Yours affectly,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

[1] One of the former painters and decorators at the Chelsea factory.

"THE LITTLE SEA-MAID"

EVELYN DE MORGAN FECIT

"She had sold her tongue to a witch that she might become an Earth-maiden, all for love of an Earth-Prince; and when evening came she would steal away from the Prince's castle to cool her aching feet in the sea. But alas! she was dumb. And when she danced a pain as of cutting knives was in her feet."—*Hans Christian Andersen.*

[The little Sea-maid is seen seated upon a rock upon which is growing velvety-green sea-weed; beside her is a piece of lovely crimson drapery. In the distance the Prince's Castle shows in purple relief against a clear lemon-and-rose tinted sky, while a rising moon is shedding a silver light on the blue water.]

Mr. Lawrence had previously urged De Morgan to condense the book, and De Morgan, in consequence, removed about 20,000 to 30,000 words—an excision which, although imperative in view of the exigencies of modern publication, is otherwise to be regretted, since the public thereby lost certain delightful scenes and conversations—especially the love-affairs of Vi, Lossie's sister, which were erased bodily. To the author's mind, these omissions left the story with gaps noticeable where the narrative in the original had at first run smoothly and leisurely to a conclusion which was inevitable: 'I never cut anything out,' De Morgan complained, 'but that I do not afterwards feel it has left an hiatus which has destroyed the sequence.' Meanwhile he went to immense pains to ensure that all his facts were correct, and referred to experts on every subject respecting which he felt that his knowledge might be at fault. 'I am especially anxious about *improbabilities*,' he wrote; 'Authors do make such frightful blunders! There ought to be a profession of Literary men's blunders censors who could be paid by them at so much a blunder detected.' None the less, at the last moment he was saved from inaccuracy on a subject of which he admitted ignorance. It is said that the proofs were actually in the press when Mrs. Mackail hurried round to point out to him a slip of the pen which she had overlooked when reading the MS. '*You have said that the butcher left the dripping at the door!*' she exclaimed breathlessly, 'and you see butchers don't leave dripping at doors!' De Morgan thankfully and hurriedly removed the dripping from 'standing in the place where it ought not!'

Throughout this period, however, he was obsessed by the idea that when his book was actually published his brief satisfaction would be at an end; in the interval, one of the events to which he looked forward with almost childish pleasure was the thought of sending out a copy of his first novel to his sister, who was then in Egypt. Threatened with phthisis, Mary De Morgan had been ordered to live abroad, and had subsequently undertaken a strange task which interested her greatly—the charge of a Reformatory for children in Cairo.

'You may fancy [wrote De Morgan to Mrs. Henry Holiday, on December 4, from Florence] my disgust at not having *Joseph* by Xmas day to send out to my sister *Mary, in Egypt*—(Divinity was always my line!) But don't do more about him till you receive your presentation copy from the author, who is very much interested that you should read him (*Joe*) to see if you sympathize with a strong impression the Waldstein sonata produced upon him. No doubt Joe was wrong, as he was quite ignorant of music. But his author would like to know how it strikes a contemporary.

'He is afraid an immortality founded on his publisher's too flattering opinion may be cut off in its prime by the appearance of the VOL. itself. Meanwhile he is enjoying it, and strutting about like any peacock!

'I wish we could be in London to see the Show.[1] Few men can show such a forty years' work (I can speak to the forty and more, personally)—as H. H.

'It was a curious pleasantry of Fate to name him *Holiday*—but I interpret it as an insinuation on Fate's part that a successful day's work is the best of Holidays, and the best of Holidays is a very successful day's work indeed!—I agree with F.

'. . . I admire Miss Brickdale's work immensely, with a faint sense of a Shakespearian clown somewhere. It is a pleasure to think that such good work is so successful. Evelyn is busy to a degree—100 centigrade, *circa*.

'Love to the other angle of your triangle and yourself, from both of us.'

Nearly two months later, De Morgan, feverishly correcting the proofs of *Joseph Vance*, snatched time to write his congratulations to Mr. Mackail on seeing the announcement in the *Spectator* that the latter had been appointed Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. 'Mary, as you know,' he adds, 'is in Egypt. Accounts of her read well and are, I hope, authentic. Probably she will be back before I can send *Joseph* out to her—as he takes so long in publishing. Why, here have I actually completed *two* more stories and the proofs of *Joe* only half corrected! I discovered frightful blunders in him—but there! what does it matter? As far as I can make out, modern Fiction consists almost entirely of solecisms!' In the following letter from his wife, however, there is no mention of the event which was impending:—

Evelyn De Morgan to Professor Mackail.

'*22nd Feb.*, 1906.

'DEAR JACK,—

'I must add a line to send my own individual congrats. We were so delighted when we read the news in the *Spectator* yesterday—a belated *Spectator* that reaches us after the fact, so to speak, but is nevertheless our only newspaper from England. This sounds very Italian and unpatriotic, but we are both getting very cosmopolitan I fear, and have a general tendency to look upon a two days' old English paper as perfect for wrapping-up purposes but otherwise tedious and bulky, and we go in for Italian papers because they are slight and flimsy as to news, and one need not read them; and then we discover a real piece of good news like this and realize that we are savages in the backwoods, or we should have known all about it.

'When are you coming out to Florence again? I am sure Angela[2] must be wanting another necklace. Only give us time, that is all we ask, and we will provide you with any abomination in the way of weather you have a fancy for, "From Greenland's icy Mountains," etc.

'Love to Margaret,

'Yours ever,

'EVELYN DE MORGAN.'

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[1] Mr. Henry Holiday was having an exhibition of his pictures.

[2] The recipient's daughter.

It was while the publication of *Joseph Vance* still tarried, and while the first advertisements of his advent were appearing, that one morning De Morgan was electrified to discover his fictitious hero had taken an unexpectedly concrete form.

(Louis) Joseph Vance to William De Morgan.

'GOOD GROUND, LONG ISLAND, N.Y., U.S.A.,
'*June 18th*, 1906.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'I am sure you will appreciate how uncommon are apt to be the sensations of one who wakes up to find himself famous; especially when that one has been striving ever so earnestly to make himself famous by writing, rather than by being written about.

'My London publisher Mr. Grant Richards, in a letter of recent date, enclosed me a clipping from an English publication, to the effect that:

'*"Joseph Vance" is the title of a novel by Mr. William De Morgan, which Mr. Heinemann is publishing. It is said to be a "complete human document."*'

'Naturally I want to know about it. *Wouldn't you?* It is a curious fact, and one that may interest you, that, from the beginning of the history of the Vance family in America, there has always been a Joseph Vance, the son of Wilson Vance. My grandfather was a Joseph, my father a Wilson, my son a Wilson, and his son will be a Joseph if——!

'Furthermore, aside from this worthless representative, who writes stories of mystery and adventure for a living, there are to my knowledge two other Joseph Vances extant on this side of the water. One, Lee Joseph, flourisheth like a green bay-tree, editing a trade journal in the city of New York (my winter home); and the other, plain Joseph, is (I believe) a prosperous farmer in north western Ohio (whence comes my father's family).

'So you see there are more than one who will be uncommonly interested in *your* Joseph Vance.

'And right here and now (in our American idiom) I want to say that in view of the fact that you've made so free with our name, I think you should try to balance matters by sending *me* a copy of the book—for the success of which I beg you to accept my best wishes.

'I'd like to know how it feels to be a "human document"—especially a "complete" one.

'Believe me,
'I am, faithfully yours,
'(LOUIS) JOSEPH VANCE.'

De Morgan's first surprised answer to the materialization of his hero has not survived; but shortly afterwards we find him addressing the latter as follows:—

'I can't tell you how funny it seems to me to be writing to a real live "Joseph Vance" after 200,000 words of writing about a fictitious one!

'Very many thanks for your letter! I really believe the "human document" is on the point of publication, or the *Spectator* wouldn't say so. I hope it's all true! but sometimes I really doubt it. A party who, after a lifetime spent on Pottery, suddenly takes to pottering, may well think he is dreaming when he sees his book announced just under the most widely circulated

book of the moment. For Heinemann's advt. shows my book just under *The Jungle*. And even inventing mills and sieves and bicycles [1] doesn't warrant a belief that the inventor can write fiction.

'I am writing to Heinemann to send you a copy as soon as he is qualified to do so. I hope to receive one myself now at any moment.

'But how strange that the name should chance on two title-pages simultaneously in such a totally undesigned manner! The complete disconnexion of one with the other is *almost* demonstrable. Not *quite* though—because if I saw a work of yours before 1901, the name may easily have remained in my memory without my knowing why. The first chapter, written as a random experiment to see what I could do with fiction, was written thenabout, and forgotten by me—shoved among some business papers—but found by my wife a year later (*circa*). She insisted on my following on, and the 20 pages became 600! Now the only thing I know of against my having picked your name from a book of yours, is that after using it, I had a powerful misgiving that in my youth—my early Victorian youth—I had seen a small book called *Joseph Vance, Carman*. So much so that I asked a friend to hunt for it, at Stationers' Hall, etc. But nothing was found. If it were to turn up, I should fancy it would be the source of my J. V.

'I hope you will not be displeased with either Joe Vance or Christopher his father. The latter certainly comes on the stage the worse for liquor, and gets into a fight. But he changes a good deal in the course of the story.

'I suppose the book was called "a complete human document" because the Appendix had not been cut out. I hope you will get as far and not think Appendicitis necessary.

'I am very curious to see your work also. . . . I hope every one who reads your book will read mine in consequence and *vice versa*. This will promote healthy circulation. What the Italians call "felicissimi augure" for both of us!'

Mr. Vance had meanwhile introduced himself to De Morgan more fully as an Author, forty years younger than the author of *Joseph Vance*; 'I peddle words for a living,' he explained in an amusing letter, 'and write tales of battle, murder and sudden death, complicated with mystery, and salted with a modicum of "heart interest," to please the public. . . . I even compose

[1] De Morgan had invented a new duplex gearing for a bicycle, which was actuated pneumatically, with two independent gears, for wheels and chain. On either side of the handle bar was a rubber bag; the squeezing of one made the wheel cease to be free, of the other changed the gear. 'I kept the patent alive as long as I could afford it,' he wrote, 'but after I had spent some £300 on it, I allowed it to lapse.'

the rattle-te-bang brand of romance that brings me my bread on the type-writer " thinking into the keys," and there you have the full measure of my depravity. But I beg your charity. I'm a youngster—so there's hope for me ! ' And he adds :—

' Coincidences multiply ; that the publication of my book should tread so close upon the heels of yours in England seems not half so strange to me as the fact that, when I dropped into Putnam's book-shop, on Twenty-third Street (New York) a few days since, the very first thing that met my eyes was a thick red volume, labelled as to its back " *Joseph Vance—De Morgan—Henry Holt,*" nestling cheek by jowl with a thin green book similarly stamped " *The Private War—Louis Joseph Vance—Appletons !*" I didn't buy the human document because I was counting upon your promise to send me a copy. Altogether I find that my biographer puts me to the blush, with the wisdom of his years and the variety of his achievement. Books, bicycles and Pottery and Sieves and Mills ! Goodness ! I'm humbled who am only a Lit'ry Feller and have never been anything else save a husband and father. The more honour is mine, that your book should bear my name !

' Thank you for your kind and cordial letter. I'm wishing you all sorts of good reviews and heavy sales for *J. V.*, and I am grateful to Mrs. De Morgan for having searched until she found the talent you'd buried in the napkin. . . .

' Do you know (and this is judging mostly from my own experience) I've a notion that most of the good books are due to good wives ? '

At length the novel *Joseph Vance* put in a belated appearance, and one of the first copies was dispatched to Mrs. Maisie Dowson with the following inscription :—

To a lady who was very instrumental in bringing about the publication of ' Joseph Vance.'

M istress Maisie, Mistress Maisie,
A m I dreaming, drunk or crazy,
I f it's true that *Joseph Vance* is
S afely launched—and circumstances
I ndicate that such the case is—
E ndless credit's Mistress Maisie's !
D ifficulties of this distich
O nly make the writer's fist itch
W ith its consciousness of platitude
S triving to relate his gratitude ;
O verstatement's none so aisy—
N ever doubt it, Mistress Maisie !

' Verses are not much to swear by,' he added apologetically ; ' but I can tell you acrostics are not easy literature.'

At this interesting moment in De Morgan's career, when his fate as an author hung in the balance, Mrs. Ady (Julia Cartwright) relates as follows : ' In the summer of 1906, I had the good fortune to meet him at a country house, where he was staying with one of his oldest friends. We had often met before, generally at Burne-Jones's house, and as I sat by his side at dinner, we recalled those happy times and sighed for the days

and the friends that were no more. George Howard, Lord Carlisle, who happened to be my other neighbour, joined in our conversation, and agreed with all De Morgan said of the brilliant play of fantasy, the wit and tenderness, the indefinable charm which made our beloved painter the most delightful companion in the world. And with tears in his eyes De Morgan said how it is always thus in life. 'We fail to realize the importance of the present and let the good days go by, without any attempt to keep a record of our friends' words and actions, until it is too late.'

'Towards the end of dinner he dropped his voice and whispered that he had a secret to tell me. "The fact is," he said, "I have perpetrated the crime or folly—whichever you choose to call it—of writing a novel, which has just been published, and what is more wonderful I have in my pocket a flattering review of the book, in to-day's *Spectator!*" He went on to tell me how the story of Joseph Vance had grown into being . . . till the actual writing became a pleasure and the book took its present shape. The speaker's earnestness and animation, I remember, excited Lord Carlisle's curiosity, and after dinner he asked me if what he had caught of our conversation could be true and that De Morgan had really written a novel. There was no denying the fact, and soon we were all reading *Joseph Vance* and the review which had given its author so much satisfaction.

'From the first, the success of the novel was phenomenal. . . . The critics were unanimous in their chorus of praise, in spite of the unusual length of the book, which seemed likely to prove a stumbling-block . . . and the public on both sides of the Atlantic hailed the advent of a new star on the literary horizon.'

No one was more astonished than its author at the immediate *furore* with which *Joseph Vance* was greeted. He had called it 'An ill-written Autobiography' and a critic, in a phrase often subsequently quoted, promptly pointed out that 'the "ill-writing" is in truth consummate art.' The *Spectator*, as indicated, led off with lavish eulogy. So far from cavilling at the length of the narrative, it dwelt emphatically on the fact that if the writers of olden times—Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot—could come to life again, they would, in comparison with their work, find most of our modern literature 'thin and anæmic'; and it added—

'It is refreshing to find that one stalwart champion of the older school survives. Mr. William De Morgan follows, even in its lesser mannerisms, the method of Dickens and Thackeray. Slowly and patiently he builds up, not an incident or a career, or even the whole career of one man, or woman, but the whole careers of a large circle of friends. He gives a true and complete picture of certain forms of life . . . but we have never

for a moment a doubt about the reality of the story he tells. . . . The book is a remarkable novel—a fine novel by whatever standard we judge it . . . every character down to the humblest has the stamp of a genuine humanity.'

The rest of the Press followed in similar vein; and in America, even more than in England, the book was welcomed with a prolonged storm of applause. There are, in brief, two tides to success, the one to coincide happily with the fashion of the moment, to float effectively on the flood of current opinion; the other—but this is given only to the strong—to stem and surmount it. This last achievement was De Morgan's. 'To a highly nervous and irritably impatient reading public,' remarked Professor Lyon Phelps, 'a man whose name had no commercial value in literature gravely offered in the year of grace 1906 an "ill-written autobiography" of two hundred and eighty thousand words! Well, the result is what might *not* have been expected. If ever a confirmed optimist had reason to feel justification of his faith, Mr. De Morgan must have seen it in the reception given to his first novel.' And later the keynote of this success is defined: '*Joseph Vance* is not so much a beautifully written or exquisitely constructed novel as it is an encyclopædia of life. We meet real people, we hear delightful conversation, and the tremendously interesting personality of the author is everywhere apparent . . . It vibrates with the echoes of a long gallery whose walls are crowded with pictures.'[1]

Yet the success which the book attained was not at first anticipated by Heinemann, whose ardour had been damped by the difficulty he had experienced in getting it taken at all in America. Mrs. Drew, the daughter of Mr. Gladstone, read an early copy, and wrote to the publisher to say that she considered it a remarkable book, but that she hoped in a second edition the print would be better, as she could 'recommend no friend over forty to read it.' 'I am glad you like the novel,' Heinemann responded, 'but with regard to the print, it is very unlikely a second edition will be called for.' Eighteen months later he sent her a volume of *Joseph Vance* in better type. It was the *eighth edition*. 'The entire world,' she wrote before that date, quoting from a review, 'seems now divided into Vancers and non-Vancers!'

The criticism of his work, however, which had the greatest interest for the author came from his personal friends, a few of whose letters may be quoted here, each in its unstudied enthusiasm being typical of its particular writer. One of the first was from his erstwhile playmate at Fordhook, Lord Lovelace, whose

[1] *Essays on Modern Novelists. William De Morgan.* (Macmillan.) By William Lyon Phelps, Professor of English Literature at Yale University, U.S.A.

letter likewise bears reference to another matter. For while *Joseph Vance* was making his *début*, Evelyn De Morgan had been persuaded to have an Exhibition of her pictures in Bruton Street. There her work had attracted considerable attention, and, among other purchasers, Lord Lovelace had bought a beautiful little picture illustrative of the Five Mermaids in the Fairy Tale by Hans Andersen, a sequel to one she had painted previously of the solitary 'Little Seamaid who loved the Prince.'

The Earl of Lovelace to William De Morgan.

'*July*, 1906,
'OCKHAM PARK,
'RIPLEY, SURREY.

'MY DEAR DE MORGAN,—

'Your interesting and delightful book arrived last week just as I was starting for London whence I returned to the midst of a party here which has only left this morning, so somehow I never found a moment to write even a line of thanks together with much appreciation of the three or four opening chapters which I read at breakfast the morning Joey Vance came here.

'My first impression was like that from *Treasure Island* or *A Man of Mark*, a somewhat startled amusement at the outrageous company of the fighting circles you introduce one to—not unmixed with sympathy for the throwing of the bottle which drops so miraculously into the horrible sweep's eye. It made me think of the Irish account of a scrimmage, "I dropped my stick on Tim's head and unfortunately he died."

'I shall now be able to continue to improve my acquaintance with the charming Miss Lossie and talk to you about her and your other creations by the time you and Mrs. De Morgan come here. *Her* creation of the five elder Mermaids is now here, provisionally hung, for the place requires some readjustment on account of light, and has been much admired. Francis Buxton said if its beauty could not receive justice and a sufficiently good place, he would be delighted to relieve us of the difficulty! But we are not going to let it be carried off elsewhere. I propose to hang up underneath the words of Hans Andersen (in Danish) how the five sisters floated up arm in arm for many an evening hour over the waters.'

A somewhat melancholy interest is attached to this letter, as its writer died the following month; but in the interval he had completed his perusal of *Joseph Vance*, and had been one of the first to point out that De Morgan's book was 'the work of an idealist with realistic details,' and how curiously but happily it combined 'the sentiments and traditions of the Victorian age with the more analytical methods of to-day.' Other letters ran as follows:—

Sir William Richmond to William De Morgan.

'1906.

'Have you seen the *Spectator*—get it! *Such* eulogium of your novel; two Cols.—I do congratulate you, old fellow. After such an article your book should sell like wildfire. My most affectionate congratulations to you both.

'Yours ever,
'W. RICHMOND.'

THE FIVE MERMAIDS

(A SEQUEL TO THE LITTLE SEA-MAID)

"Once in the night-time, her sisters came arm in arm. Sadly they sang as they floated above the water."—*Hans Christian Andersen.*

[In the possession of Mary, Countess o Lovelace.

Mrs. Morris to William De Morgan.

'*July* 17*th*, 1906.
'The Old Hospital, Burford.

'Dear Bill,—

'I don't think I have ever written you a letter before, but this is such a very grand occasion that I feel I must put pen to paper and say how happy your book has made me. I have not laughed so much for many a long year. Lossie is delightful, I had to stop reading when she had gone to India; but started afresh when I remembered there was more Mr. Vance to come. What a dear he is!—I can't write half what is in my mind to say in praise of the book, letter-writing being a lost art with me now.

'May you give us many more books is my earnest wish.

'Yours affectionately,
'Jane Morris.'

Mrs. Henry Holiday to William De Morgan.

'Hawkshead,
'Ambleside.
'*July*, 1906.

'My dear William,—

'I have never enjoyed the reading of any new book more in my life. I have only as yet finished the 4th chapter—but I have re-read them many times—always aloud to myself, for fear I lost the full delight of either manner or matter. Mr. Vance is quite as great a creation as "Janey"—and you never can tell when she begins, where she will end. She is a joy. I delight in each one of your creations—from the Sweep who butted, all the theological parts, to the child who sucked his night-gown—the "Cards"—in fact, all of them.

'Winifred[1] comes to-night—we shall set-to at once, and I shall be "a prevarication," for I shall have to make believe I haven't read any of it. And when we go back home next month we could not bear not to read it to Henry—and all the visitors (the *best* of course only) shall have bits read to them as soon as they are seated. It's like nothing else at all—but it recalls the time when Dickens first came out and the wonder of it all. Not that I mean you are like him or anyone else—the whole thing is so young and fresh and vigorous—you might be 17.

'I can't pick and choose my words. I only feel in a tumult of happiness. I send you my most respectful love and isn't Evelyn proud?

'Your affectionate old friend,
'Kate Holiday.'

'Such a eulogy,' wrote back De Morgan, 'should be thanked for on the nail; accept my thanks hot, like little pies on a board from the baker's, that have not far to come.'

Bernard Sickert to William De Morgan.

'Crown Hotel,
'Hay, Hereford,
'*Sun: September*, 1906.

'Dear Mr. De Morgan,—

'You will not, I hope, think it "beastly cheek" for me to write and congratulate you on your wonderful book, *Joseph Vance*. It is long since I have enjoyed any novel, as I did this one, and its length was one

[1] The writer's daughter.

of "linkéd sweetness long drawn out." I was delighted with "this 'ere hinseck," and as for Mrs. Vance, senior, addressing Mr. Joseph as if he were a Basuto, I chortled so disgracefully over this in the Underground that I had to excuse and explain myself to an interested old gentleman. When a man makes a public nuisance of himself in a public conveyance, he is justified in saying, "Please, sir, it wasn't me, it was the other boy"—but the ethics of schoolboys requires that he shall then give the other boy the opportunity of punching his head.'

Mrs. Fleming (née Kipling) to William De Morgan.

'7/1, LOUDON STREET,
'CALCUTTA,
'*September 20th*, 1906.

'DEAR, AND FAMOUS, NOVELIST,—

'I haven't read it yet, it hasn't arrived in India—but its reviews have and what a chorus of praise they are! Unanimous, is no word for it—"fore God they are all in a tale——"

'I tracked your meteor flight through many papers, purring loudly over the *Review of Reviews* and the *Spectator*—and then in the *Bookman* I found your portrait—looking quite kind and usual and not at all proud—and it emboldened me to write to you at once—Todgers has done it and no mistake and I cannot tell you how delighted I am. Oh, it's you must be a happy man and Evelyn a proud woman!

'I am so looking forward to making acquaintance with Joseph—and Miss Lossie.

'And what is the title of your next book I wonder and the next after that?

The same to the same.

'7/1, LOUDON STREET,
'CALCUTTA.

'*Nov. 1st* (but still 80° in the coolest room), 1906.

'Joe came last Sunday and I have been reading him, and chuckling over him, and delighting in him and crying over him ever since. I *never* cry over a book so how do you expect me to forgive you for "the chapter that had to be written"? I stood it bravely—with only a blink or two—till I came to the "touch of the rings" when the hand "slipped away for ever"—and then I had to get another handkerchief. How do you *know* all the early part? Where did you get the scenes and surroundings your childhood never knew—but which you depict with such perfect realism? I want to know how long you have been writing it—and lots of things. It is less like a first book than was ever any. I believe—if we only knew the truth you have written a large number and published them anonymously! Perhaps you are a well-known writer in disguise. Don't tell me that you are "Le Queux" or "Silas K. Hocking"—refreshing your soul by writing a real book after dozens of machine-made popularities. But that Joe is really the first of all I cannot believe. Where's crudity? Where's indecision? Where's stilted dialogue—and woolliness of characterization? Perhaps you burnt all Joseph's elder brethren (were there 10 of them?), if so I am very sorry but I look forward joyfully to Benjamin in the Spring. Your synopsis of him I like—but do I understand your "five ghosts" are all freed from their corpses—or still wearing them? I am very much indebted to you for the "ghost in the corpse" phrase—and for the Doctor's opinions in Chap: XL and I should find it hard to tell you how much I appreciate the description of Cristoforo on Page 462. I have not yet thanked you for your letter and the "Portrait of

the Author with autograph." I'm glad your subliminal self wrote me down a niece before the mere supra-liminal You corrected it.

'FINIS took me in for two whole seconds and made me very angry—don't you think in your fourth or fifth edition you should have "*Finis (but go on)*." I could not have borne it if Lossie had been left in the dark.

'With my love and renewed and first hand congratulations.

'Your affectionate,

'TRIX FLEMING.'

The following from Mr. Lockwood Kipling, the father of Mrs. Fleming, expresses an appreciation equal to her own. Mr. Kipling, who had been at one time connected with the manufactory of pottery at Burslem, and had subsequently held a post at the South Kensington Museum, had recently returned from Bombay, where he had for long filled an appointment at the School of Art. He also wrote brilliantly, but complained to De Morgan that he found it impossible to concentrate his attention on original composition. 'How can I write,' he used to say, 'when I am dying to be out in the sun and the wind?'

'TISBURY, S.O. WILTS,

'*21 November*, 1906.

'MY DEAR DE MORGAN,—

'*Joseph Vance* gave me some days of the most perfect pleasure an inveterate reader of my age can taste. And when I emerged from its glamour I said to myself I will write post-haste to its "onlie begetter."

'But, as usual I dawdled, having more to say than seemed fair to inflict even on an author who had set himself aloft in the pillory of a great success. And I wrote to Trix telling her at some length about the book and saying that surely in weaving so delightful a story you must have been the happiest man alive. This, as you justly observe is scarcely a critical view and it only expresses one side of my appreciation. But a side to which your own title-page inclined me. You say "ill-written"—and, knowing an honest mind when I meet one, I looked for the reason. It seemed to me perhaps that you meant the book had written itself, that the folk of your fancy had taken charge of the pen and that in some sort the story had gone *à la dérive*. I suppose most intensely felt and vivid work gives that impression—to writer possibly as to reader, and leads one to envy the man who has the good fortune to be taken by the hand and led through surprising and enchanting adventures. But when one looks closer, or rather perhaps a little further off, to get the perspective right, it is plain that all the rules of the writer's art are observed, for there is nothing wanting of all the preparations, developments and unfolding prescribed since good story-writing first began. And the labour of love is also a triumph of skill.

'So, besides the congratulations one owes to a friend recently wedded (to the Muse) and evidently radiantly happy in his housekeeping, one has to doff one's hat reverently to a skilful master who at one effort is in line with the most honoured names in English letters.

'Is this a little sonorous? Not a bit in my honest opinion. I am not given to heroics, only I feel—as Willie Laidlaw said to Sir Walter—"this is a varra supeerior occasion."

'I don't think I should do more justice to it, though I might gratify

the garrulity of my age, by yarning at large on the merits of the book as they appear to me. But I should want more sheets than you would care to read and the reviewers have doubtless told you as much as you care to know in this kind.

'And, as plain matter of fact, to such art as yours, reviewers' and readers' opinions matter nothing. I am glad to think there is more coming.'

Lady Tennant [Lady Glenconner][1] to William De Morgan.

'I am going to recall myself to your remembrance on the strength of *Joseph Vance*, if it be not too intrusive, and to tell you how much, how *greatly*, how *entirely* I am enjoying the book, and to thank you for it. You knew me long ago when I was a little girl at the Grange visiting the Burne-Joneses, and once my Mother took me with her to visit your tile-making place. I was Pamela Wyndham then, and now I am married and have five children and am Pamela Tennant.

'But it strikes me all this is rather the letter that Beppino would have written, too much about himself, and I really want to express to you, if I can, how glad I am to think there is some one who is writing such a book as *Joseph Vance*.

'When I was at Clouds lately, I went over to see Mr. Lockwood Kipling at Tisbury, who is a very old friend of ours. And I found he knew your book, and we talked it over, and it was he who gave me your address. Of course for years we raved about your sister's stories—*On a Pincushion* and all the others—and now my children love them, I am glad to say, and our only regret concerned with them is that there are not more.

'On the occasion I spoke of when my Mother went to see your tiles, you gave me one that immensely took my fancy, it was a Do-Do bird, in green, and I have got the tile quite whole and safe now. I saw it the other day and looked at it with quite new eyes, now that I know your book. I have a corner cupboard at home with glass doors where all my odds and ends and toys and treasures of childish days live, and that is where the Do-Do tile has been all these years, and that is how it has not been broken, I suppose.

'There are countless things I am indebted to you for in the book. Aunt Izzy's mishearings for one—especially the one about serpents posting the letters. Then such bits as when Lossie comes into the room at Sarry Spencer's home, and it seems as if all the blinds had been pulled up. Of course the first scene, most vivid and informed with life—I mean the scene of "crocking the hinsect" is delightful to me. . . . Christopher Vance is a great character—very new and absolutely real . . . but if I were to enumerate all the things in your book that I like, you'd read your whole book over again and I'd never have finished. . . . I can't help liking the couplet about the Body and Soul, although it's altogether horrible—so horrible that when I say it to myself, I generally finish with *Ugh!*

'I am giving this book of yours away to people whom I feel I shall cease to care for if they don't like it too. . . .'

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[1] Pamela, daughter of the Hon. Percy Scawen Wyndham, of Clouds, and granddaughter of the 1st Baron Leconfield, married, in 1895, Edward Priaulx Tennant (son of Sir Charles Tennant, 1st Bart., and brother of Mrs. Asquith), who succeeded to the Baronetcy in 1906, and was created 1st Baron Glenconner in 1911. He died in 1920.

William De Morgan to Lady Tennant.

'VIA LUNGO IL MUGNONE,
'FLORENCE.

'Indeed neither you nor any of your family need recalling to my remembrance. How should they?—though indeed it is true you are one of its members whom I have not met since the old never-to-be-forgotten days of the Grange. At least I think not, but speak short of certainty.

'What a happiness it is to me to get letters like yours about Joe!—a pleasure that two or three years ago the rashest anticipations would have flinched at. And do you know I get such a lot of appreciation on Joe's account that I am getting that vain there's no a-bearing of me, as Anne at Poplar Villa would have said! The last two reviews I stuck in my egotism-nourishing book of cuttings were from Minnesota and Oregon—that I used to read Catlin about when I was a boy. Isn't it all funny? Only, I'm not sure that it isn't even funnier that I should just be going to write out what you say of my sister's fairy-stories to Cairo, of all places in the world, where she is actually bossing a reformatory of small female Arab waifs and strays, with sable Nubians for surbordinates! How she will enjoy my quotation from your letter!

'Let me thank you very much for one thing about Joe—your allusion to Aunt Izzy. Do you know I have been made quite unhappy by deaf people who have supposed her to be a piece of unfeeling ridicule of an infirmity no one pities more honestly than I do. I had an anonymous letter from a poor deaf lady, who could not say too much in praise of the book, but implied that all her pleasure had been spoiled by Aunt Izzy. She couldn't understand why lame people should not be "made game of" too. This way of looking at it seems to me to drag the whole thing into a false light. A report of telephone blunders, however laughable in themselves, are no garment of derision for those who make them. I am so glad anyone should read Aunt Izzy and not think me an unfeeling beast.

'The couplet *Body and Spirit*, etc., is from a little volume of Swinburne's I have never seen—know it only from quotation—called "The Seven against Sense"—parodies of Tennyson, etc. What I have come across was perfectly lovely. Do you know when I repeated those two lines to Morris once he said, "Well! I call that good common sense."

'I must really read Auerbach's *On the Heights* one day—I have so often heard about it. Such a lot of things I've never read!!

'I mustn't cover this sheet—neither time nor reason permit it. Thank you again, and yet once more for your letter.

'Give my love and my wife's to your mother—*totidem verbis*.'

[1] *A Stranger to William De Morgan.*

'GOLDEN GATE AVENUE,
'POINT RICHMOND,
'CAL., U.S.A.

'DEAR WILLIAM DE MORGAN,—

'Pardon the apparent familiarity—it is affection that dictates the "William"—(I'd like to call you Joey).

'I have just finished *Joseph Vance*, and so powerful is the impression on me that I cannot just shut the book (as I do others) and put it away.

'I have just to speak to some one about it—there is (alas!) no one

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[1] For obvious reasons the anonymity of letters is preserved where the communications are confidential in tone and it has been impossible to ascertain if the writers would object to the publication of their names.

near me who would understand, if I did speak. Something probably would be said that would wound me, as I feel now—that is why I choose to speak to you, the Creator of this wonderful book.

'The impression it has made upon me may be gathered from the enclosed page [1]—I was so worked up, I had to sit down and try to comfort poor Joey.

'I remember, years ago, I did the same thing when I lost *my* Janey—I wrote her a letter.

'You have wrung my heart; I remember only once feeling something of the same when I read Peter Ibbetson by du Maurier, and in a much less degree David Copperfield; but in those days I was young and it did not hurt so much, but now alas! I am old and alone. . . .

'This is the first work of yours I have read, and greatly as I admire you, I am almost afraid to look into another, I shan't want to for a long time anyway—indeed I don't know how you could have the heart to write anything more—it's enough for one lifetime.

'I part with Joey with great reluctance, he is so human and so loveable, and altogether he has brought a "web of strange filaments of pain that keep my eyes dim"—yet I take some comfort from his question "what profit to oneself is the indulgence of grief at the best. Of how much less if each pang adds a *new pang* to *other pain elsewhere*."

'As for you, William De Morgan, may you live long and prosper is the wish of a lonely human being who loves books.'

'My pen,' wrote De Morgan from Devonshire in the autumn of 1906, 'is simply aching with the amount of work it has to do in answering friends' letters, known and unknown, about *J. V.* These letters are not meant to be compulsory of answers, but it is wonderful how compulsory they become. I find they interfere seriously with what I wanted to be a rest. . . . Yet I prize my magazine of congratulatory correspondence. But oh! the blunders that turn up! the stupid pen-slips one makes! and the palpable errors one overlooks! I have actually called Cheyne Row Cheyne *Walk* after living there sixteen years!'

Professor Mackail to William De Morgan.

'*12th Nov.*, 1906.

'CHER ET GRAND MAÎTRE,—

'Have you read the flaming advertisement of Joseph that Heinemann is putting out? I have just had the exquisite joy of reading it, in huge letters on half a column of the *Athenæum*. In case of any awkwardness with Them Above, I think you ought to go at once and drop one of your best tiles into the Arno (the Mugnone would no doubt be handier, but there would be a greater risk of its being fished out and returned to you like the ring of Polycrates). Read and blush—

JOSEPH VANCE
UNIVERSALLY PROCLAIMED
THE GREATEST NOVEL OF
THE DAY.

'I think it was mean of him to drop his voice on the last word. *Age* would have rounded it off better and would have been less trouble to the printers to set up.

[1] Unfortunately lost.

'Some day I hope to see a list showing the sums paid to authors for works of fiction, somewhat as follows (the first two items are real facts) :—

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Humphry Ward	12,000	0	0
Winston Churchill	8,000	0	0
J. W. Mackail	5	6	8
W. De Morgan	25,000	0	0'

'No,' De Morgan replied from Florence on November 20, 'I haven't seen that advt.—not yet awhile. I didn't blush at all! As I believe your own daughter once said to her Granny —"Much wants more!" and I'm going in deliberately for as much self-laudation by deputy as I can get. Of course it ought to be *Age* not *day*! You see, I shall have to climb down next novel; so I am just carpe-ing the diem, I sometimes stop in the street to give three cheers for Joe.

'I am, however, receiving many letters of a steadying and balancing sort. Mary is writing me fearful castigations from Egypt on account of a story I sent her to read. My bad taste and vulgarity are, it seems, a caution for snakes—of the sort that have those predispositions. Also my dropping into politics will, she says, lose me every friend I have in the world, especially you and Margot. I need not say I have promised not to publish it. There's only 75,000 words at most, so it doesn't matter.

'I am catching it from other correspondents too. A deaf lady writes me a reproachful letter about Aunt Izzy. I am cruel and unfeeling! Why are not blind people made game of too? And characters with wooden legs? Her letter was anonymous, otherwise I should have written to her that I was not responsible—it was inspiration—a low class of "mediumship." The fact is if the image of a party gets into my poor old 'ead, that image says things of its own accord, and I am too lazy at the time to run the whole universe through my head to see if anyone can possibly object. I know I ought to, though.

'Do you know I have really been severely blown up for making Lossie talk of a "little pot-bellied Archdeacon," and when I lent the book to the dearest of old boys (in the West of England too) who in some sense was a P.B.A., I burst into a cold perspiration when I recollected it. I hardly dare look a friend in the face now who wears a real Hat,[1] and I feel that 99 per cent. of my English friends either despise or hate me for slamming (a Yankee phrase) in national beverage. I know I shall fall a victim to the dirk of an incensed Homeopath one of these days. . . . Dear me! what a lot of illegible rot . . . there now, isn't that poetry?

[1] This refers to Christopher Vance's Top Hat, 'the hat representative of Capital, for which he went to 18*s*. by reason of moral influence and well worth it at the money, he said.'

'I heard from Heinemann that Macmillans had made overtures to him about the next book, and possibly they might agree to co-operate somehow. *How*, I don't know—but that's not my look out. . . . I can't make out about the net books, etc. But I saw particulars of parcels of spent novels in yesterday's *Times*—ten uncut for 18*s*. 6*d*., published at 6*s*. each!!!!'

'What a pity,' wrote back Mackail jestingly, 'that you didn't actually take to politics so as to have become "Viscount De Morgan of the Vale"—how well it would have sounded!'

But still De Morgan did not regard his change of profession seriously, 'for,' as he explained later, Cockney-wise, 'when I took to it, I had been so long outside the pale making tiles not tyles [tales]!' And still his thoughts clung to that other career which he had been forced to abandon. 'If J.V. runs *like mad*,' he wrote to Ricardo, 'I shall be able to push Fulham—and I hope Capital will feel ashamed of himself! What is the use of a Rockefeller unless he trusts me with blank cheques?'

From the other side of the Atlantic, the real Mr. Vance, 'the American Edition,' as he termed himself, wrote with enthusiasm on receipt of his fictitious namesake: 'I am really afraid of seeming to "gush" when I try to put my appreciation into words. It is truly very fine indeed—the most thoroughly satisfying book I have read since *David Copperfield*, and after drawing a comparison between 'David' and 'Joseph,' he says:—

'There are so few books written to-day. We write abbreviated yarns in curtailed phrases and clipped English, with one eye on the rate per word and the other on the Publisher, who points sternly to the 100,000 word figure and declares, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." So we write few Books; and fewer yet are published. It's a real pleasure, then, to get acquainted with a *Joseph Vance*—a book that you cannot read in one hour and forget in the next; a book whose people live and breathe and stay with you, remaining your friends for always.

'There's mighty little Vance in the story—Vance as we Vances know it, of course. But that's no matter. I'm glad that you remembered the name and liked it well enough to use it. Because that makes me feel somehow (and irrationally enough) as if I knew you. . . .

'But one can't help wondering how much (or how little) is autobiographical, just as one can't help feeling glad because Janey didn't really get drowned—the *real* "Janey," I mean . . . and one hopes that she will live long to be proud of Joseph.'

William De Morgan to Louis Joseph Vance.

'*September*, 1906.

'I am afraid you must be thinking me shockingly ungrateful for your most generous expression of opinion about your "unconscious Boswell's" literary venture. I can only hope I deserve some margin of it that lies beyond what I take to be a like criterion to one that has procured me a criticism far beyond my merits in England—a certain liberality of welcome to an old chap who really has done more than anyone could reasonably have expected of him!

'In reply to a question in your letter, my book is no more my autobiography than *Terence* (I trust) is *yours*. I cannot even think without a shudder of any acquaintance of mine (even epistolary ones, which I absurdly forget we are, sometimes) having been involved in events that were "all bluggy like anyfink"—of course, you know Helen's immortal Babies?

'Also there is not a single portrait in it anywhere. . . .

'My wife in her character of the "real Janey" thanks you for sharing her own gladness that she is not drowned, and also for the pleasure she has had in reading *Terence*.

'Am I, I wonder, addressing an entirely false image of you as I write—and *vice versa*? I look forward to one day confirming or correcting it.'

Perpetually questioned, however, respecting his relation to his own work, De Morgan wrote: 'I have been asked how I came to write *Joseph Vance*? Why I didn't write it before? Why didn't I make it shorter? Why didn't I make it longer? What is the underlying import and final issue? What am I a-haimin' at? and so on. I have also been asked why I didn't omit Christopher Vance and make more of Peter Gunn; also why I didn't leave out Janey and the wreck, and have nothing but Lossie all through.

'As to why I didn't write it before, I can't answer. I give it up. But I know how I came to write it this time. I wrote the first chapter to try if I could write fiction; and having decided that I couldn't, put it away in a drawer. That was the end of Chapter I—for that year, at any rate. . . .

'As to why I didn't make it shorter, and longer, I did *both*. I did the last first, and the first last; I did not want to be the death of Mr. Heinemann. Six hundred pages there were. I must say he was almost heroic about it. "Don't *spoil* the book by cutting it, on any account," said he. "But do what you can." I did what I could, cancelled as many pages as I could wrench out, and sent the rest back again—not the six hundred.

'As to the ultimate purport and final issue: Speaking seriously, I suppose no one ever writes a thick book of close print without some kind of aim: some dominant idea. But he may not be able to define it, for all that. I am quite unable to do so, in the case of this book. The dominant idea may be the chord of the Waldstein, or the problem of how to dedicate a lifetime of devotion—of sane and human love—to two women at once. Which is it to be? I cannot tell!

'As to the other queries, I can only say I wish I could have left out about Janey and the wreck, or got some one else to write it. And as to Peter Gunn, I would have put in more about him, only I was afraid he would come and butt at me. For he was or is a real person, with his name slightly changed. His original—poor fellow—killed a policeman many years ago, and it took eighteen powerful men to convey him to the station.

His name was Jim Cannon. I cannot answer for this being more than forty-five years back, but I think it was about that date. He is absolutely the only real person in the book.'

Punch meanwhile rang the changes amusingly on the dual 'Joseph Vances.'

'Mr. Louis Joseph Vance's new book is called *The Private War*,' it announced, 'but previous to its publication, Mr. William De Morgan had written *Joseph Vance*. The hero and narrator of the *Private War* is *Gordon Traill*, and it only remains for *Traill* to write *Mr. De Morgan*, and then the matter will be fairly settled.'

Mr. Vance likewise wrote to narrate how an artist having drawn a 'very counterfeit presentment' of him in fancy dress :—

'A San Francisco Editor published it as a portrait of my hero, Terence O'Rourke! which, together with the appearance of my unexpected autobiography, is so confusing that I hardly know whether I am myself or an Irish Adventurer all bluggy and broguey, or the real Joseph Vance!

From Mr. Vance, De Morgan learnt that in America 'Joseph has a coat of many more colours than that which Mr. Heinemann has fitted him with for his public appearance in England'; and De Morgan subsequently discovered that the American edition of the book had been brought out in a pale cover adorned with a gay decoration of three chessmen, representing a Knight and two Queens, a singularly happy indication of a plot which dealt with the influence of two women upon the hero's life. This design greatly pleased De Morgan. 'If,' he wrote, 'it is specially planned for my book, it is very clever. If it is the usual Holt's monogram, it is one of the oddest of the many oddities that have attended this book!' Next, in reference to similar 'oddities,' Mr. Vance replied :—

'I am going to cap your experiences with the remark of a dear lady, a Vance by marriage (not my Missis!) who, after reading *Joseph Vance*, expressed her verdict of it that it was a most charming book—but—(with a sigh) she could have wished that Christopher had been born in a little better station in Society! . . . She is an American, too!'

Later, referring to the fact that De Morgan's novel was announced as one of the 'six best sellers,' Mr. Vance relates :—

'Some time ago, you know, the *New York Herald* published a half-page or more of burlesque of my new book, and mighty clever it was too. I am reminded of it by that term "best-seller." You see, when the burlesque hero was cavorting about in the Frognall Street House, he paused long enough to remark, aside: "My, how stuffy it is here! Why, it smells as musty as all six of the best cellars!"'

Meanwhile the curiosity of Joseph Vance, the author, respecting the author of *Joseph Vance* increased. 'In my father's

Life,' wrote De Morgan, 'is mention of a man with whom he corresponded for thirty years—and never met. I hope that won't be our fate!'

'A friend in New York,' announced Mr. Vance, 'wrote me yesterday that he had discovered a portrait of my literary godfather in the *Bookman*, so I have sent for that publication and hope presently to discover if I am addressing an entirely false image of you.'

By and by came the verdict:—

'Quaintly enough, I, for one, had *not* created a false image of you, not very false, at least; you are much as I reckoned you must be, from your letters, from your book, from any number of impressions I had subconsciously received since I wrote that impudent note bidding you stand and deliver one copy of *Joseph Vance*! So I am pleased beyond measure.'

But while *Joseph Vance* was flying through the press, and there was no longer any doubt respecting its success, erroneous rumours were current respecting the identity of the author. For a time few connected the name of William De Morgan with that of his father, the famous mathematician; as did few, who were not personal friends, with that of the aforetime maker of tiles. On receiving a packet of American newspaper-cuttings from Mr. Vance purporting to give much information about his antecedents which was apocryphal, De Morgan wrote out to the latter a brief account of his life in order that Mr. Vance might be in a position to contradict all false reports. The gist of what he therein related concerning the past is known to us; but it was endorsed by a description of more recent experiences from the pen of his wife:—

Evelyn De Morgan to Louis Joseph Vance.

'19 LUNGO IL MUGNONE,
'FLORENCE, ITALY,
'*27th October*, 1906.

'DEAR MR. VANCE,—

'Ever since *Joseph Vance* saw the light of print last June, I have been floundering, gasping, gurgling in a sea of fiction, and now comes your kind note and enclosures to my husband with yet more and more fiction, till I feel I must make an effort to know who I am; and still more what sort of cameleon kind of a bogy of a husband I seem to have been harbouring unawares. I want sympathy and enlightenment, and I feel sure you will be kind—you, and Mrs. Vance—and listen to my tale of bewilderment.

'First, I am emphatically told that *I* was (Janey) drowned off the coast of Spain, and a column erected to my memory; then when, with all the vitality I possess, aided by what I may be allowed to term the plasticity of my appearance, I protest, I am fixed by the soul-searching eye of a friend, and the announcement made that I am *Lossie*! and that there can be no doubt whatever about that! Next comes another friend who drops the Lossie, and I find I am again Mrs. De Morgan, this time it

is a hesitating confidential inquiry as to " If I have any idea how Mr. De Morgan came to know so much about lower class life, etc. ? but perhaps it is indiscreet to ask ! perhaps they ought not to have inquired." And I am left with a sense of dark corners in the past. Then I am cheered by another less compromising view of the position. " My dear, your husband is a medium ; it is the only way of accounting for his knowledge of the lower classes, his writing is inspired." This sets me up a little and I am beginning to feel better, when another friend assures me positively that he was a drunkard in a previous state of existence, otherwise it would be quite impossible for him to write with such feeling about drink.

' And now, dear Mr. Vance, come your kind enclosures, and I read in print that my husband is an old artist well over 70, and brother of the mathematician.

' Now first of all he is not 70, indeed he is not, I was not there when he was born, it is true, in fact they would have had to put it off a good many years for me to be present, but I feel sure his mother would have told me if he could have been 70 now, then how can he be his father's (the mathematician's) brother ? that's what puzzles me most of all ; and lastly it is *I* that am the artist, he is the potter, and makes lustre tiles and bowls, to his great cost and the satisfaction of many. Now if ever you read to the end of this long letter the only reward I can offer you in gratitude for your forbearance and patience is my solemn assurance that I do not believe you are in the secret service of the Czar or that you are busy waging a private war with any one, I repudiate the notion that you stabbed Netze to the heart, or that Mrs. Vance clinched matters with a revolver. I can enjoy and thank you for your stories of dire adventure, without incriminating the innocent author of the tale.

' So far had I written, when this morning's post brings your letter with the photos, forwarded on from London, and to crown it all I find that truth has proved herself to be stranger than fiction and that Mrs. Vance too is an artist ! Well I hope she will tell me what she is painting, and now that I know I have a sister brush on the other side of the Atlantic, I feel still more anxious that my humble efforts should not be regarded as sort of mystic projections of what my husband will do when he is 70, sort of astral things you know, not good honest wholesome paint and canvas, produced by the writer of this letter, and who has had what is technically known as a " one man show " a few years back in Berlin, and who held a similar show in London last summer, and who in order to combat the evil effect of a sedentary life, goes to a swimming bath at 7 o'clock in the morning in summer (by the way, could the artist of 70 have grown out of that ?) and does Sandow exercises in the winter mornings, I recommend these practices to Mrs. Vance, and shall make bold to send her a photo of a big picture [*The Valley of Shadows*] I have not long since completed if she will be good enough to accept it.

' My husband is writing to you, he is just off a sea voyage or you would have heard from him sooner. Our yearly migration to milder climes has intervened and correspondence has suffered in consequence.

' Believe me with kind regards to Mrs. Vance and the same to yourself,

' Very truly yours,

' EVELYN DE MORGAN.'

' What a pity,' wrote De Morgan genially at length to Mr. Vance, ' that you live such a long way off ! ' and Mr. Vance responded with equal affability but a note of interrogation— ' A long way from *where* ? '

THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

"Dark is the Valley of Shadows;
Empty the power of Kings;
Blind are the favours of Fortune;
Hungry the Caverns of Death;
Dim is the Light from Beyond;
Unanswered the Riddle of Life."

(*Verses by E. De Morgan.*)

CHAPTER XI

THE MAN AND THE METHOD

1906–1907

'HOW do you know whether you are successful or not at forty-one?' Alice asks in *Alice-for-Short* when Charles Heath laments the failure of his life as an artist. 'How do you know you won't have a tremendous success all of a sudden? Yes—after another ten years of real happy work. It has all been before, this sort of thing—Why not *you*?' And as De Morgan, writing his second novel, penned these words, he knew that the 'success all of a sudden' had come in his own life—not at the age of forty-one, but at sixty-seven, when the faculties of most men are on the wane—when they are thinking languidly of laying aside the work which has engrossed their manhood, in order to enjoy a well-earned rest during the few remaining years while they await death.

The recognition was at first incredible to him. 'Really,' he wrote to his publisher, 'anyone would think from the letters I get from all over the Globe that I had written the Holy Bible—only Bowdlerized, of course! I dare say my shower of testimonials is only every author's experience. Only, you see, it's all new to me!'

He was the more surprised at his success when he gradually understood that his outlook and his methods were entirely out of harmony with the alleged taste of the age. With remarkable prescience—since at the time the writer knew nothing of the man of whom he wrote—Professor Phelps, criticizing De Morgan's first book, wrote: 'Despite the likeness to Dickens in characters and atmosphere, *Joseph Vance sounds not only as though its author had never written a novel previously, but as though he had never read one. It has all the strangeness of reality.*' And this, suspected by the critic, was curiously near the truth.

'The fact is,' De Morgan said to a friend, 'I have blundered into the wrong generation. I belong entirely to the Dickens period of life and literature. I read greedily when Pickwick was up-to-date, and when all the world was as Dickens drew it. Afterwards I plunged into an active life in which every moment

of my time was absorbed by art, by chemical problems or mechanical inventions, and for forty years I scarcely looked in a book unless it was about pots or mechanisms. When I turned again to literature, I took it up exactly where I had left it off—the interregnum did not exist for me.' He was like Jane Verrinder in *Alice-for-Short*, that strangely fascinating creation of his brain, the old-young bride who, after a lifetime of forgetfulness as the result of an accident, during which her body has aged and her mind remained dormant, resumes consciousness precisely where she has lost it—in the hey-day of a long-vanished youth and a long-dead world.

And it was, contrary to all precedent, just this sense of a resuscitation in De Morgan's novels—the piquancy of contrast between the present and what he termed ' then-a-days '—which, depicted by a masterhand, caught the public imagination. With a happy unconsciousness he had defied the orthodox standards of his age, and they melted away before his charm. In his penmanship he was tender, he was strong, he was daring; yet about all which he wrote there clung a romance that was elusive—something of the delicate aroma of a treasure which has been laid by in lavender and which, half-ghostly in its essence, stirs memories that are wholesome, and clean, and sweet.

Admittedly he was one born out of due season. He belonged to a date before the Age of Hurry, and he refused to be dictated to by the mere passing of Time. As a reviewer pointed out: ' He outraged every canon of convention; public taste had decreed that books should be short, brilliant, superficial—impressionist, yet couched in exquisite and studied language.' From the first, De Morgan declined to be hustled; he allowed his pen to wander over the paper without let or hindrance; he indulged in the graphic slang and the rollicking puns of a schoolboy; the cockney of a coster; the phraseology of a poet; the profundity of a philosopher. There are passages in his books which tear at the heart-strings; there are others which leave the reader amazed at the light-hearted irresponsibility which so penned them. He troubled about no studied periods or finished diction; he has been described as a man who buttonholed his reader and talked to him in homely fashion. He did not even tell a story—he let the characters in his story speak for themselves. If he reviewed a situation he reviewed it entirely from the standpoint of his puppets—in their language; the tale with its ingenious perplexities spun itself out of their very human sayings and emotions. He was discursive, he digressed, he soliloquized at will; again and yet again he was pithy, he was sapient, he was subtle: but always he was simple and sincere. His pictures of Life were exact. He was in literature what a Pre-Raphaelite is in painting—he showed a passion for minute-

ness and for accuracy of workmanship—for a whole flawless in detail. His finished work was like some delicate mosaic fashioned of minutiæ which a smaller genius would have ignored. It was said of him, 'he gets his sharpest and most telling effects by the perfect skill with which he introduces the multitude of trivial details, unimportant in themselves, but momentous in their bearing on the growth of character and event, and indispensable if the life recorded is to reflect fully and faithfully life as it is lived.' But he saw that the tale of each man's existence is woven in a work-a-day world—that life itself is but a sequence of trivialities in which the greater hinge on the lesser and each has an imperceptible bearing on the whole. He wrote:—

'Be good enough to note that none of the characters in this story are picturesque or heroic—only chance samples of folk such as you may see pass your window now, this moment, if you will only lay your book down and look out. They are passing—passing—all day long, each with a story. And some little thing you see, a meeting, a parting, may make the next hour the turning point of an existence. For it is of such little things the great ones are made; and this is a tale made up of trifles—trifles touching human souls that, for aught we know to the contrary, may last for ever.'

'De Morgan's chief occupation throughout half a normal lifetime,' writes a critic, 'was the beauty of minute detail, the quality of glaze upon a teacup, the excellence of colour or design in a tile. His is the type of mind which gradually through the passage of years might be expected to gather up a treasure-house of fine, delicate, unique ideas about life in general, much as a connoisseur gathers together rare gems of porcelain quite indifferent as to whether they group themselves harmoniously upon their respective shelves.' Out of the garnered experience of a lifetime he wrote, out of the reality of the Past he fashioned the fiction of the Present; but the habit common to all reviewers of desiring to identify each place and person in a work of imagination, or to foist upon an author, as his own, opinions expressed by his puppets, was strongly resented by him.

'When I read *Joseph Vance* over after publication,' he admitted, 'I found I could pick out little bits here and there which were real, in that they were personal experiences of my own or were things coming within my knowledge of others. But there is not a trace of my own life in the story, except, perhaps, the pages about engineering patents. On the other hand, Charles Heath in *Alice-for-Short* is largely reminiscent of my own life as an art-student—though there is one great exception—Charles did more work! But in no one instance is there an actual portrait drawn as such, nor an actual place literally portrayed.' In short, the whole was such stuff as dreams are made of, a phantasmagoria bred of events that once had happened, of ideas once absorbed, impressed haphazard into a creation distinct from reality. The potter moulds his pot and the novelist his story out of the material

ready to his hand; yet in their new guise each becomes an original conception of the worker's brain.

Thus to those who know the story of De Morgan's life previous to his literary adventure, an essence, but not a transcript, of those earlier years may be traced in much which he wrote. In Dr. Thorpe we see many of the characteristics of his father, the shrewd, kindly Professor; in the discovery of Joe's talent for mathematics we recall a similar incident of the Professor's own boyhood; in the brain and speech of the little children we trace something of the baby-boy at Fordhook—that baby with the wonderful forehead, to whose outlook on life De Morgan could still revert more than half a century afterwards—'I remember my fourth birthday as if it were yesterday,' he had written at the age of sixty-five. In Charles Heath's denunciation of his own incapacity, as later in the lament of Eustace John, we read the writer's review of his own wasted years. Again, in his presentment of the sordid life of the slums we seem to hear his mother's piteous tales of mid-Victorian poverty—of the alleys, the workhouses, the prisons, the asylums of her youth; while in other descriptions of homely life we recognize his own close association with his factory hands.

'There are comparatively few men in any age,' remarks Mrs. Ady, 'who have attained distinction in two separate branches of art. Great poet-painters there have been, it is true, such as Michelangelo in Italy of the Renaissance, and Dante Rossetti in our own times, but there was generally a close connexion between their creations in the different arts. Either the picture was inspired by the sonnet, or the verses gave birth to the painting. It would be difficult to trace any connexion between De Morgan's tiles and the novels which his prolific pen poured forth in his later years. Yet, as I have often heard him explain, his novels were indirectly the result of his work as a potter. It was during these first fifty years of his life when he was busily engaged in making experiments, and looking about for boys and men whom he could train to help him, that he acquired the familiarity with the working classes and dwellers in the slums which is one of the most striking features of his books. The close and daily contact into which he was brought with his own potters, listening to their talk and watching them at work as he sat in a corner of the factory making designs or meditating new inventions, gave him that intimate knowledge of their habits and language, that insight into the points of view and prejudices of their class of which he writes with so much sympathy and kindly humour.'

For De Morgan showed himself a past-master in his study of the mentality and mannerisms of the homely characters of whom he wrote, even in his queer trick of self-involution into their personality and speech. He reproduced faithfully their fashion

WILLIAM DE MORGAN
From a photograph

of leaving a sentence incomplete but with its purport clear; of elaborating with picturesque side-issues information which might have been conveyed in a few words. He understood that while a Product of Higher Education will go straight to the point in what he wishes to narrate, the Natural Man will eschew such prosaic methods and first wander leisurely—interminably—in a maze of his own cogitations. But in regard to the cockneyism which De Morgan employed so effectively, few know that it was the outcome of a jest of his youth—of the practice of years, the dialect facetiously affected by his early companions—Rossetti, William Morris, Burne-Jones—in their reaction against their own æstheticism as well as against the prim and stilted diction approved in their Victorian youth.

In like manner, the houses, the streets, the scenes and surroundings where his characters live and move and have their being, are all constructed out of the collective memories of his own boyhood and manhood; even in the names which he employs we find fresh memories of real life—often distorted with a hint of laughter.[1]

In his account of the 'extensive basement with cellarage' at No. 40 ——, Soho, where little Alice-for-Short saw the ghostly 'lydy with black spots,' and where later Messrs. Chappel and Pole carried on a business in stained glass, we recognize the basement at 40 Fitzroy Square, where De Morgan personally worked at stained glass in the early days of his career. There, the child of his imagination, little Alice, a pitiful scrap of humanity, is depicted living in eternal twilight with her drunken father and mother, the monstrous cats and the intangible ghosts. The scene of the dance, on the contrary, where the eighteenth-century throng disported themselves on the night when the lady who stole the fateful ring was brutally murdered, is, De Morgan himself admitted, the ball-room in the house of Mrs. Siddons in Great Marlborough Street, where he and his wife jointly exhibited pottery and pictures. In that latter house, moreover, we feel the atmosphere of the story more imperatively, we trace the exact rooms which were in his thoughts. Again, there is an 'extensive basement,' gloomy and mysterious; above it is the ground-floor with the ball-room aforesaid—in the story rented by the picture-dealer; the first floor where Charles Heath had his studio; the second floor belonging to the Misses Prynne, and the third floor where the odd Mr. Jerrythought, painted and soliloquized. In this same house, however,

[1] 'Janey,' it will be remembered, was a nomenclature familiar to De Morgan from his early days, the name of his nurse at Fordhook. 'The Pigeons,' the public-house where the celebrated quarrel took place between Christopher Vance and the sweep, Peter Gunn, is a transposition of 'The Doves,' the ancient hostelry at Hammersmith, near Kelmscott House. 'Peter Gunn,' we see, had an original Jim Cannon, and so on *ad infinitum*.

occurs the death of poor Verrinder, which was suggested by the sudden death in her sleep of Miss Laura Hertford, who rented a floor at 40 Fitzroy Square—an event which made a profound impression on De Morgan in his youth, since he was among those who forced open the door and found the body. Yet Verrinder himself was drawn from one of De Morgan's contemporaries at the Academy schools, an old and pathetic perennial student, who haunted the place, and who, by a strange coincidence, bore the name of Pickering. Thus we can people each building with the creatures of the author's fancy, and recognize how his brain took a part of one house of his recollection, and a portion of another, to construct the whole dwelling of his dreams; and how he modelled his characters in like fashion.

So, too, in those evanescent but persistent ghosts which play such a prominent part in the tale, and link a shadowy past with a realistic present, one feels how the atmosphere of the Occult in which he had been brought up had permeated his outlook upon life, uniting the Seen and the Unseen in a romance and sequence which fascinated his imagination even if it never wholly convinced his reason. Stories of uncanny experiences which happened to the De Morgan family, and of their own attitude towards these, recur persistently to memory as one reads the tale of ghostly visitants in De Morgan's novels, made more convincing in *Alice-for-Short* by the halting speech and puzzled sincerity of a little child. 'Bogy things come and go' throughout his books, but the author himself surveys them with an air of detachment. 'The characters discuss the ghostly appearances from their different angles; but "the Story" [like the Professor and his son] takes no angle at all. It merely narrates.' [1]

There is, however, one other outcome of the past on which it is impossible to lay too much stress in reviewing the matter and the manner of De Morgan's writing; and which, in the main, was the keynote of his success.

Disraeli has said that 'books written by boys which pretend to deal with knowledge and give a picture of human nature must necessarily be founded on affectation.' It is only after a lifetime that, from the Pisgah-heights of experience, we can view existence at last in its true perspective—the little no longer looming big or the big little, but the whole mellowed to a just harmony of parts. Yet when that vantage ground is gained, the weariness of the climb is upon us and the chances are that we are no longer able to impart to others the benefit of that wider vision—and so we fall asleep with the tale untold. '*Si jeunesse savait—si vieillesse pouvait*' is a regret as poignant in literature as in life; and De Morgan was perhaps unique in

[1] *William De Morgan. A post-Victorian Recital*, by F. Warren Seymour, 1920.

that he wrote with the keenness, the freshness, the intuition of Youth, tempered with the philosophy, the kindliness, the large-minded vision of Age.

'There are scenes in his novels,' *The Bookman* remarks, 'that if a younger man had written them might have been merely squalid and repellent, might have been shrewdly observed and cleverly presented, with something of cynical attachment or with gushes of pretty and false sentimentality; but they could not have been handled with the largeness of comprehension, the easy charity, the kindly humour and whimsical, gracious forbearance that are the fruit of knowledge only, and that enable Mr. De Morgan to feel and reveal the whole truth instead of but half of it—the piteousness as well as the baseness of his grimmest incidents and most degrading characters. . . .

'As a consequence, his good people are never too good, and you do not wholly blame his sinners when he has told you all about them. He has seen enough of life to be always ready to make allowances and never ready to condemn or despise. He draws you some besotted human creature with a most unflinching realism, then changes your abhorrence into sympathy and compassion by showing you in a luminous paragraph or two what the poor wretch used to be and how he grew to be the thing he is. This profound tenderness for human weakness is an undertone through all his books. . . .

'He makes his stories satisfyingly plausible and realistic by his ingrained habit of looking before and after. He cannot even see a shivering, withered old crone serving out a ha'porth of baked chestnuts over her charcoal fire without reflecting that those skinny, claw-like hands were once the beautiful hands of a young girl; he is never contented to sketch the least insignificant of his characters in outline only, he must needs give you the whole man and the whole woman by deliberately linking up their to-days with their yesterdays, so that you know their dispositions, the environments that shaped them, the motives that actuate them, and can guess how they will behave in a given crisis before the crisis is upon them.'

Thus, in *Alice-for-Short*, after describing the wonderful scene where the fascinating Peggy and little Alice visit the mother of the latter as she lies dying in the hospital—a drunken wreck of humanity battered to death in a squalid row by the equally besotted husband she had once loved—the reviewer notes how quietly but powerfully De Morgan can yet make one feel that that repulsive, drink-sodden wretch has had part in a far-away, far-other past:—

'No younger writer could have written that. Its whole power lies in its sheer truthfulness; there is no attempt at all at fine writing or idealized dialogue. I recall pathetic passages from many great novels, but can think of none more quietly effective, more touching in its simplicity of narrative, its underlying sense of tragedy, its covert understanding of, and pity for, human error.' [1]

So it is that while the incidents described by De Morgan are fictitious, the Self underlying the whole is real. It is his own character which he has written into his pages—it breathes from every phrase—his own insight, his own humour, his all-pervading tenderness, his large-hearted understanding of his fellow creatures

[1] *The Bookman*, August, 1910.

which Time had wrought. He can view Life with an unflagging sense of amusement; he can see humanity with a keen recognition of its weakness; but there is never a hint of bitterness or of sarcasm in his delineation of the foibles of his fellows. The cynicism noticeable in Thackeray, the sense of caricature and exaggeration which occasionally mars the writing of Dickens, are wholly absent from the imagination of De Morgan. 'In that book you unpacked your mind,' a friend once said to him of *Joseph Vance*; and he is just an old man talking to us genially of the Past—of people he has known, events that have happened, conclusions he has arrived at, of by-gone days which to him are dearer than the Present; while his very garrulousness is part of his charm.

* * * * *

In his affinity to Dickens, so often discussed, De Morgan's relation is primarily to the Period, not to the Man. Dickens, as we have seen, represented the Zeitgeist of his youth. The atmosphere which he had breathed 'when all the world was young' and his mind plastic, had been permeated with the spirit, the spell, the wonderment of the great novelist; but, above all, it was his own world. The people he had talked to and of, the people with whom he was *one*, are those depicted in the pages of Dickens. The early photographs of De Morgan illustrate this in a manner which, to us of a later generation, is almost startling, for they represent a youth who in dress, in appearance—and one feels in speech—might have stepped from the pages of *David Copperfield*. 'We had not read far into *Joseph Vance* before we shouted "Dickens *Redivivus*!"' wrote Professor Phelps; 'but,' he added, 'it was not an imitation; it was a reincarnation.' It was more—it was a survival.

Between Dickens and De Morgan there exists indeed that similarity of date and manner; but the achievement of each remains distinct and individual. 'If Dickens had never written a word, your novels would be just as they are!' wrote Mrs. Drew. Both, it is true, painted on a broad canvas; both delighted in a number of subsidiary characters—in one of De Morgan's novels no fewer than forty-two *dramatis-personæ* are introduced; both loved to develop in ample, leisurely fashion an old-time romance with plot and counter-plot; but there are essential points of difference between the men and their methods which no superficial similarity can disguise.

For one, whereas Dickens relates a story and tells you about the puppets which figure in it, we have seen that De Morgan allows the creatures of his fancy to reveal themselves. When he is not soliloquizing, or talking confidentially, the tragi-comedy of his narrative unfolds itself entirely out of the clipped, colloquial dialogue of the actors; he gets his most telling effects by a

sequence so simple, so intensely human that one scarcely recognises its profundity till this has stamped itself upon one's imagination indelibly. 'The astonishing freshness and charm of Mr. De Morgan's method,' wrote Professor Phelps, 'consist partly in his abandonment of literary precedent, and adhering only to actual observation. It is as though an actor on the stage should suddenly drop his mannerism of accent and gesture and behave as he would were he actually, instead of histrionically, happy or wretched.' His pathos and his insight are thus greater than that of Dickens because they follow a closer parallel to nature; his humour, to a modern ear, is more spontaneous, because to-day the humour of Dickens has necessarily diminished in flavour like the grotesque wit of Cruikshank's drawings which illustrate it. De Morgan's laughter is infectious—not because he caricatures life, but because he presents life as it is with its familiar eccentricities, its inconsistencies, its bathos, its grandeur held up afresh for our inspection like homely objects in the added brightness of a mirror.

'Dickens caricatures; De Morgan characterizes,' pithily wrote another American author.[1] Even if he describes the actions of a child, or the movements of a dog, he projects himself for the time being into the infantine or the canine mind with a success which is mirth-provoking. Words and phrases of his cling to remembrance from their absurdity—their aptness: the 'tame-cat-ability' of certain folk; the resemblance of another character to 'a fretful porcupine'; the opinion of little Dave in regard to Age and Experience that 'they never climb up posts without some safeguard of being able to come down again'; Lady Ancaster smiling in 'a well-bred way—a Debretticent way—call it'; or Aunt Izzy 'cherishing memories of people almost too well-connected to live'; or again some one of less refined instincts rejoicing blandly in an 'Alco-holiday.' The character of Christopher Vance, the vulgar but loveable father of Joe, is a crowning illustration of De Morgan's manner, not because it is fantastic, but because of its complete verisimilitude to the type it represents; just as the meal-times of the Heath family in *Alice-for-Short* provide a fund of entertainment produced solely out of the faithfulness of the picture.

Moreover, unlike William Morris, and unlike Dickens, De Morgan does not preach the 'divine gospel of Discontent.' His affection for his fellows is equally all-embracing; but the social chasms which exist he bridges over with love and not resentment. At times he is not altogether aware of the existence of the chasms. Admittedly, the plumber who comes to do your drains is not the man whom you will ultimately invite to your daughter's wedding, as happens in *Joseph Vance*,

[1] F. Warren Seymour.

more especially if his conversation is aggressively vulgar and he has a predisposition to get drunk. In real life Dr. Thorpe would have adopted Joe on condition that his father never came near the house; and Joe, educated above his station, would have been hypersensitive to his father's failings. But De Morgan is unconscious of such a possibility. To him, the only recognizable snobbishness lies in a man aping that which he is not. Christopher, even in the tall hat which marks his advance in the social scale, is delightful to the last; as Beppino, the decadent son of Dr. Thorpe, is unspeakably offensive. Further, it is worth remark that the same trait is prominent in the novel written by Mary De Morgan, wherein the heroine treats her charming maid as an equal, and kisses and confides in her with unhesitating affection. Both brother and sister, as authors, could, with an infinite delicacy of touch, make merry over the superficial vagaries of character, but neither ever left a reader in any doubt concerning the quality of the heart beneath.

'There are, however, certain critics,' complained an American to De Morgan, 'who can never understand anything except by comparing it with something else they have known'; and to these De Morgan's likeness to or divergence from his literary prototype afforded a never-failing topic of discussion, in which he unhesitatingly shared, but always with the humility of a great reverence. 'Dickens was the Master at whose feet I sat!' he pronounced of himself; and it was part of the simplicity of his character that where another man would have been annoyed at being called an imitator, he was proud of the imputation, but ready to dispute the conclusion swiftly arrived at by his reviewers that 'all such comparisons are absurd, for the distinction, the individuality of Mr. De Morgan's writing is very much greater than its similarity to any other known author.'

None the less, his suggested likeness to a writer of a later date caused him some perplexity.

E. Nesbit to William De Morgan.

'*April 27th*, 1907.

'MY DEAR SIR,—

'When first I read your *Joseph Vance* I wanted to write and thank you for it. But I felt I had no right to bother you with my appreciation. Now, however, I have read the book eight times, and though that gives me no more right, it does give me more excuse.

'*Joseph Vance* is a great work of art in a certain *genre* unapproached by any living author. Reviewers have said that your style is like that of Dickens. I think it is, in certain points. But he was always coming to grief from lack of taste—and you never do. Also he forced, often and far too often, flowers which grow so naturally and beautifully in your garden. The one author whom you really resemble—and no one else has ever come near to resembling him—is Henry Kingsley. And you seem to me to beat him at his own game.

'Your book is a beautiful book, wise and witty and tender. I believe

it will be living and beloved when most of our present-day novelists are dust and their works have perished with them.

'I have written a good many books myself, and I can understand and honour the long patience, the ungrudged toil, the steadfast purpose that you have given to the making of this book. It is as a journeyman in the Guild wherein you are a Master, and as a human being who loves the human beings you have made, that I have found myself unable any longer to keep from thanking you.'

'I am puzzled about Kingsley,' De Morgan wrote in reference to this letter. 'I admire him, but don't feel in the least like him. Whereas I am so conscious of my own *rapport* with Dickens, that whatever I write (in his hunting grounds) I have to think all through his works to make sure it isn't simple plunder! *All through*—honour bright!'

It is interesting, therefore, to hear from De Morgan's own pen his opinion of his two great predecessors in fiction.

When the hundredth anniversary of Thackeray's birth was celebrated, one of the points on which it was wished to get a consensus of the opinions of noted men was the time-honoured question: Was Thackeray a cynic? De Morgan expressed himself as follows:—

'The youth who was asked for his definition of a rhomboid replied—"That depends on what you call a rhomboid."

'In reply to the question your letter asks me, I can only say that it depends on what you call a cynic, whether Thackeray deserved that name or not.

'I gather from the nearest book of reference that I can lay hands on at this moment that the Cynics "*neglected the conveniences of life*," and ultimately "*became so disgusting from their impudence, dirty habits, and begging, that they ceased to be regarded with any respect.*"

'I have therefore every reason to believe, although I had not the good fortune to know him, that William Makepeace Thackeray was not, historically, speaking, a Cynic.

'The non-historical definition seems to be "an ill-natured person who says bitter things." But the bitterest things are always said—at least such is my experience—by the most tender-hearted people. If my belief is right, Thackeray has still a chance of being called a cynic rightly.

'I do not think it important to decide whether he was, or was not, a cynic. I wish more cynics were Thackerays.'

When the Dickens Centenary was celebrated the next year, De Morgan, who had been recently termed 'the Twentieth Century Dickens,' was asked by the Dickens Society to contribute any recollections of the novelist whose memory they wished to commemorate. 'I make no protest about the "Twentieth Century Dickens!"' he wrote in an aside to Heinemann. 'It's rather rough on the century, though! What sort of a Dickens will the Centuries have when they come of age, at this rate?' But among his papers are the following pencilled jottings:—

'127 CHURCH STREET.

'(1) Unhappily I have no personal recollections—I wish it were otherwise.

'(2) In my opinion I owe to Dickens everything that a pupil can owe to a master—to the head master. Whether I have succeeded in rising above mere imitation I can't say—I must leave the point to my readers. My own memory of Charles Dickens is simply one of unmixed gratitude and plenary acknowledgment of obligation.

'(3) It is impossible to assign a value to any works without a standard of comparison. In the case of the two great novelists of last century, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, there is no such unit among English writers, except Shakespeare. To make such a comparison would be presumptuous, unless one had given to it the study of a lifetime.

'(4) Humour always appeals most to its own age—keeping this in view, I should say Dickens's humour showed an exceptional vitality. I meet people now and then who deny it, but have found their own samples of humour, produced at request, the reverse of exhilarating.

'(5) I think there can be no doubt which is his greatest book. But autobiographic parallel is such a powerful engine in fiction that it is scarcely fair to place his other works in competition with it. Conceive the difficulties of writing the *Tale of Two Cities* as against *David Copperfield*.'

In one point De Morgan differentiated between the work of Dickens and that of Thackeray. He thought that Thackeray was inclined to repeat a type he had once successfully created, whereas Dickens always had a freshly individualized character for even a single appearance. There is, however, in De Morgan's own writing one element which is absent from the works of both the earlier novelists. They, of their very period, were forced to eschew what their successor terms 'orthodoubt.' De Morgan, on the contrary, does not deal merely with this world in his analysis of humanity; he links the actual and the possible in one consecutive romance, and probes into the wherefore of Life with a happy mingling of science and philosophy. His metaphysical speculations on the whence and whither of the human ego have a value beyond that of the mere ingenious telling of a tale. Few that had once read it, lightly forgot the conversation at Poplar Villa on the Ghost in the Corpse, based on the lines:—

'Body and Spirit are twins—God only knows which is which,
The Soul squats down in the flesh like a tinker drunk in a ditch.'

And Dr. Thorpe's quaint summing up of the position:—

'There are two distinct classes of people in the world: those that feel they are themselves *in* a body; and those that feel they themselves *are* a body, with something working it. I feel like the contents of a bottle, and am very curious to know what will happen when the bottle is uncorked. . . . You never told us which you feel like—the contents of the bottle, or the bottle itself?'

And again:—

'"Do you see your way, Thorpe [Professor Absalom asks] to any conclusions about the hereafter itself? Anything that throws light on what and where the Ghost is when its Corpse is insolvent, and in liquidation, with all the Capital withdrawn? Because that's the Crux!"

'"That's the Crux, of course [Dr. Thorpe replies]. But beyond the physical feeling I have spoken of—little but speculation. The tendency

"Persian" vase, egg-shaped, painted in colours on a turquoise-blue ground with growing flowers.
Height 6⅛ inches. Diameter 5⅜ inches.

of it has been towards attaching weight to inferences to be drawn from what we know of the Spirit in the Flesh, the Ghost in the Corpse, rather than to those that follow from what are supposed to be communications from the other side. Some of these may be true, or may not. I have always felt on quicksands when I have been tempted to go to Bogy séances, as Janey calls them. The authentic story of one day is the hoax of the next. But what we can see in the strange phenomena *other people* is safe to go upon——" '

And after dwelling on the problem of the development, or of the stunted growth, of the Spirit observable in the human units with whom he is surrounded, he draws a comparison between the unborn child on the one hand and the unborn, or undeveloped soul, on the other.

' " Who shall say that the unborn child in its degree does not learn as much of this world as we succeed in learning of the next ? The physiologist is satisfied that the unborn child knows nothing and can receive no impressions, but then the physiologist is satisfied also that he himself is what your young friend, Joe—you remember—called . . . a wunner at knowing things, and I suspect for my part that he knows just as little of what he doesn't know at all as he did before he was born. In fact, the soul during gestation has only a *pro-rata* anticipation of what is before it. Of course, the comparison suggests all sorts of parallels, some of them uncomfortable ones."

' " For instance, Thorpe ? "

' " Well—for instance—what is the soul-parallel of the child that dies unborn ? "

' " The death of the Ghost in the Corpse," we all spoke simultaneously.

' " Exactly. Do you find the notion comfortable ? I don't. But I do derive a good deal of satisfaction from its opposite—the maturity of the Ghost in the Corpse. . . . It is the keynote of my philosophy in this matter. The sacramental word *growth*. If I am right, a long life to him is the best wish we can offer any man. At any rate, he has the opportunity of growing up, though of course he may avail himself of equal opportunities of growing down or sideways—developing as a monstrosity, in fact ! " . . .'

And again he enlarged upon this theme:—

' . . . I busy myself keeping a close eye on the queerest of Phenomena, *Somebody Else* ; and what I see tends to confirm rather than unsettle my ideas. Ever since I began to look at this Phenomenon from my new point of view, I fancy I have got more and more able to discriminate and classify him—he almost always presents himself to me now as a growing, decreasing, or stationary Ghost. The last class is the largest, and the first the smallest. Sometimes I am able to account for a nice child turning out a nasty man by supposing that his Ghost is still a baby, and has no control over his Corpse. Sometimes I am confronted with an instance of an attractive old age following a detestable youth. I can only surmise that it is due to maturing of the contents of the bottle.

' " You are not always as mad as you seem, Thorpe," said Professor Absalom. " I discern redeeming features in your present aberration. In fact, I should say that the idea of growth being the greatest good is the natural correlative of my old notion that frustration is the greatest evil."

It is, however, doing an injustice to conclusions often as fascinating as they are subtle to quote from them extracts without

the context and so leave the argument faulty, because incomplete. But still more characteristic, perhaps, is another mention by De Morgan of his views on a future life:—

'His confidence in a hereafter [he says of one of his characters] was so strong that it often bubbled up like this and could not be kept down. . . . After all, it's a question of one's sense of humour. If I were to catch myself non-existing after death, I should simply die of laughter. It would really be too absurd if the thing that did the knowing stopped and the known was left entirely to its own devices!'

Yet De Morgan did not cherish a belief in the immortality of the individual ego from the standpoint that, this world being pre-eminently unsatisfactory involves, in common justice, the existence of a future Elysium as an antidote. When a conversation to this effect took place in his presence, he remarked inconsequently—'I don't know that I want a future life—I have been very contented.'

'But of course you do!' exclaimed his wife vehemently. 'Otherwise everything would be so meaningless!'

A third person thereupon pointed out that they both shared the fallacy common to all disputants on this subject—a conviction that the ruling of an inexorable Destiny was determined by their individual wishes!

In all De Morgan's speculations, however, concerning the whence and whither of the human ego—utterances which come now, alas! like a voice from beyond the grave—one is reminded of Browning's verdict:—

'The soul doubtless is immortal—where a soul can be discerned!'

And in this connexion we find him writing to a friend: 'I never thought when I was young that any writer could be so precious to me (apart from all his other greatnesses) as an apostle of immortality as Browning—perhaps I ought to say *the* apostle of immortality—because all the others (modern) twitter and are half-hearted.' Yet he concedes that 'a certain amount of nervousness about Eternity is inseparable from our want of authentic information'; and once he refers with a note of envy to 'that entirely self-satisfied thing—a non-Entity!'

An inconvenient habit which he developed after he had taken to authorship was to jot down at random on any blank paper handy the stray thoughts which drifted through his active brain. This had obvious disadvantages, for, just as a portion of *Joseph Vance* had been scribbled in the washing-book, so his wife, one day on examining the butcher's book, discovered a crucial problem therein dealt with in a pencilling by her husband:—

'John has a Soul—upon the whole
The tombstone's wrong that says "Hic Jacet";
But if John really *has* a Soul
What sort of thing *is* John who has it?'

None the less, when Death approached De Morgan's own citadel he met the severance which it wrought with the unflinching bravery yet profound humility of a mind which, while it accepts a great Hope, refuses to confound this with the certainty so easy of attainment to a more limited intelligence. It was perhaps doubly cruel, in the first flush of his literary success and his pleased recognition that fame had at last come to gild life with a new meaning for him, that news should reach him of the unexpected death of his sister Mary, leaving him thus the sole survivor of that once brilliant, vivacious home-circle each member of which had received his or her *quietus* in the fulness of life. Yet, even so, the theme of the Waldstein Sonata—that echo of his far-away youth—still drifted down the years and whispered its message to him that Death is not a terminus but a portal.

William De Morgan to Lady Burne-Jones and Mrs. Mackail.

'(Levanto—but write to London Address)

'29. 5. 07.

'MY DEAR GEORGIE AND MARGOT,—

'Your letters were a pleasure to me to receive—made me grateful to you for wanting to say that, and to your Maker for making you able to say it so well.

'I had a letter too, and a very, very nice one from dear old Phil.[1] He and Mary always pulled well together in old times. I must write to Phil to renew my loss of touch with him. I have let slip so much through this Italian sequestration.

'Yes—this loss has been a shell into my citadel and all the garrison, my faculties, are busy preventing the fire extending to the magazine.

'This line is really just to give you the substance of what I have heard of the end of things in Egypt. She was in March badly ill with some enteric malady, and a complication. She wrote to me of this, but said she had been *cured* by a native remedy compiled by an Arab cook and a Nubian prison warder. I felt no added uneasiness because of this. Later, her friend, Mrs. Elgood, who has been angelic to her, and who writes me all I know, found her seriously ill at Helouan—(but always, she says, attended by a doctor of repute); and had her moved to the German hospital in Cairo. The only scrap of satisfaction I can get from Mrs. E.'s letter, which I will show you when I come, is that when she said that I was coming, Mary was able to understand. Had there been a boat going within 36 hours, I should have been on my way.

'Well! I am quite ready for either Extinction or Extension, whichever and whenever. Only if the latter, all I stipulate for is absolute good, on the terms that the Master shall manage it, and that we shall all be safeguarded against the rack of this tough world. Goodbye, my dears! Love to the infants that read her stories—the other day!

'Your affte,

'WM. DE MORGAN.'

And once, at a later date, he wrote: 'The Grave shall not be vilipended. To the perfectly healthy mind (mine) it appeals with a double suggestion—the satisfaction of one's unbounded curiosity about *what next*, and the alternative of honest extinction—a great luxury looked at rightly.'

[1] Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Bt.

CHAPTER XII

'ALICE' AND 'SALLY'

1907–1908

'IT is so strange,' De Morgan wrote in 1907, 'to sit here in Florence and look out at the Duomo and St. Lorenzo, and then go back to "washing chintz on the Wandle!" When I saw that place first in '81 it was all arranged that I should make tiles and pots there. Now the tiles and pots have vanished like a dream—a very insolvent dream!—and I have turned turtle and am afloat on a sea of Literature. Which is rumness, ain't it? as the pot-boy said at the Fellowship Porter's.'

'I have seen nothing of the ex-factory,' he wrote sadly, none the less, 'and all the paraphernalia of the old processes are packed away in the garden here. Will they ever be brought out again, I wonder?' But Lady Burne-Jones wrote to him without regret: 'There is something infinitely comfortable in the idea of all the men and the furnaces and the "works" generally that stood between you and the world having vanished, and just your Self is left speaking, exactly as you wish, by means of a bottle of ink, a pen and a sheet of paper.'

Before his second book made its appearance De Morgan wrote to Mr. Vance:—

'I have told Heinemann to post you a copy of my forthcomer as soon as it forthcomes. *Alice-for-Short* is the title, with the sub-title *A Dichronism*, which I hope will explain itself to whoever succeeds in wading through 530 mortal pages of print. It is an odd attempt to weave events over a century apart into consecutive narrative, by means of cataleptics and ghosts, and sich like.

'Your namesake had had a fair circulation in England up to Christmas. Whether he has died out since then I know not, and shall hardly dare to ask Heinemann when I get back, for fear of a long face of disappointment. The effect of Alice on Joe may be good.

'I feel, in reading a story like your last, what a terrible drawback to enjoying it properly my ignorance of all things modern is. Motor-cars are a *terra incognita* to me, unless indeed one spells "terra" *terror*. They are that, for they have

frightened me and my humble bicycle off the road. While as for telephones, I can't talk through them when I try. And I shut my eyes tight, which is needless, and shout and gasp and don't believe I'm speaking to the right person. Nor am I, sometimes. Last time I tried 'phoning I was told it was twins, and her ladyship was doing well! The fact is, I wasn't born to be contemporary, at this current epoch. The old Italian town we stayed a week at on the way to Genoa is my sort—even water carried on pack-mules—no wheels known, hardly!

'I shall hope that we may meet in London; it will be a curious experience to me (as perhaps to you) to correct epistolary impressions from autopsy.'

Later Mr. Vance wrote sending a portrait and character-sketch of his ancestor, Governor Joseph Vance, 'who, if I am not mistaken, was a sort of a contemporary of your Joseph Vance—who wasn't, but *is*!' De Morgan replied:—

'The interesting document has just come and given me a feeling traceably like that of hearing of a new connexion or relation!

'Governor Vance must have been a fine old boy, and when we are all ancient history will make a part of one of its most interesting stories—for certainly the merging of the Georgian (even Jacobean and Elizabethan) bygones in the new life of the new land will have a Thermopylæ-and-Marathon interest for our remote successors—if any survive the next new inventions and discoveries!

'Here is a funny thought that crossed my mind as I looked at the old gentleman's portrait. If, when I was just born in '39, anyone had tried to invent an improbable way in which I should develop a sort of link with the last Governor of Ohio (then resting, I suppose, after official life), could he have hit upon anything more improbable than the actual *about-to-be*, viz.: that I should live 63 mortal years (just the old boy's life at that date) and then use his name for a novel, and that my knowledge of him should come to me because his great-grand-nephew Joseph *would-be novel-writing too*?

'Anyhow, if he did hit upon the truth, and prophesy right, he would have been careful to add that the opinion of the great-grand-nephew about the publications of that there baby would give the person he was going to grow to very great pleasure, and that he thanked him *con amore*. I am indeed glad you and Mrs. Vance are so pleased with No. 2. I hope we shan't have a collapse over our *nexts*, either of us—come down like rocket sticks!

'I am very glad indeed to hear that you are concentrating on a book less aimed at the railway reader—and his love-impatient public. As in the Fine Arts, the world is all confused and sweating with its own scramble up-to-date. We want a lull

in a quiet corner, to recapitulate and look round—a pause for refreshment.

'I hope a regular good unmistakable success of *Terence* and the *Private War* will supply you with a happy oasis, in which you may indulge a studied disregard of everything but your own bias and wishes, and ignore compression to 100,000 words, which is the true writer's cramp. Where would *David Copperfield* and *Vanity Fair* have been under such limitation? I would not lose a word of either—not one word!'

To his cousin, Miss Seeley, he wrote:—

'VALE,
1st August, 1907.

'MY DEAR FANNY,—

'I do call that real good cousinship to write me a letter at full length about *Alice*. That is what the human author—and, like Miss Lavinia,[1] I am too well aware that I am merely human—thoroughly likes. By this time I am thinking of the people in those two books as people I once knew, but had no hand in the fabrication of.

'I'm bound to say I think *Joe Vance* the better book all round. But this goes against the popular verdict—witness the sales! In some eight weeks *Alice* has sold some 5,000 against *Joe's* 4,000 in a twelvemonth.

'It's very funny how people want more of that detestable Straker girl. Perhaps they don't really know how odious she was. I do, you see! But one or two criticisms took it quite *en grippe* that I had not told more about her. I assure you, Charles never really knew how bad she was—fact!

'I'm happy to say that the last pages—after "Finis"—have been supposed to be *bona fide* by one critic certainly—perhaps more—*I* think it the best thing in the book.

'Your affect: cousin,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

The great incentive, however, to his new work still remained the belief that it might enable him to renew the old. 'It may be,' he wrote to Mr. Vance, 'that in the next few years my pen may supply what Millionaires have not, and the Pottery be vitalized again. That is the hope I live in.' Only gradually did this vision fade; only slowly did he understand that he had reached 'the last of life for which the first was made.' When his sudden change of profession was referred to he remarked meditatively: 'Well, my life has always been the oddest of odd stories, and this part of it is the oddest story of all!'

For long, indeed, he refused to credit the stability of his literary success; and he regarded the advent of his second novel with special anxiety. While waiting for its publication he wrote nervously to Heinemann: 'I want my reviews to stick in an egotism-nourishing book, to gratify my vanity with at odd moments. It will be so nice to prove, when the book has failed, that it was only the stupidity of the many-headed! Vol. Two

[1] Lavinia Straker in *Alice-for-Short*, an adventuress who became the first wife of Charles Heath.

must always be a critical one for an author. For one thing it must always be more critically handled by the Press. I shall never again feel as I am bound to do now—as if I were being slapped on the back by Briareus, the hundred-handed!'

He was somewhat reassured when his unknown correspondents wrote to him from America having re-christened the book *Alice-for-Ever*. But he already experienced keenly what many an author feels, that never again after his first book can he write with the same complete sincerity and absence of self-consciousness which characterized that unstudied outpouring of the pent-up dreams and convictions of years. Despite the surprise and satisfaction with which he regarded the eulogistic reviews, he recognized that there lurked in them a danger, as also in the well-intentioned but persistent criticism of friends. For all outside interference with inspiration has a tendency to confuse the clearness of an author's vision, to engender mistrust of his own intuition; hence it is a question whether the uses of criticism counterbalance its abuses.

'It is for this reason,' he remarked once, 'that Joseph may be superior to his brethren! A first book is so often in a different category to anything which an author produces subsequently. Later works may be an advance in construction, as they will certainly be more in conformity with accepted standards; but something will have gone from them, never to be regained, of the freshness, the artlessness of expression which may be akin to genius.' For so it is that the author who writes with his thoughts divided between his pen and his critic may hit the ephemeral fashion of the moment, but his influence will be as brief as the labour which it involved. As in Art, so in literature, only what is produced with the heart's blood will take root in other hearts.

Later he remarked: 'I am quite right in accounting *Joseph Vance* my best work, and I am convinced it will remain so. The conditions under which it was written can never recur. I am encumbered now not only with my *rapports* with criticism, but—even more—by the constant question: 'Have I, or have I not, written all this before? My memory of what I *have* written is unsound, and it does not do for a writer to repeat himself.' But in regard to this fear that he should unconsciously duplicate remarks or experiences in his different novels, he once observed brightly: 'Now I know *why* people will say that I repeat myself. The lending library has just supplied a friend with a copy of my last book in which the pages 1 to 40 are followed by another 1 to 40! Q.E.D.'

He, however, never believed in re-writing or polishing anything that he felt actually expressed what he wished to express. Sincerity was everything; style was too often an affectation

which marred spontaneity. '*Never* alter anything to please anyone else,' he wrote once emphatically to the present writer; 'it is playing fast and loose with Retribution! Nothing is ever gained by worrying phraseology. Say just what you feel, just as you feel it; and stick to it!' He even refused to be perturbed when a literal-minded gentleman bombarded him with correspondence to prove that he had been guilty of a gross blunder. 'You who pretend to write Literature, you who are looked upon as one of our great novelists,' this critic complained, 'you have actually said that cows "appear to have time *on their hands*!" and cows have no hands!' 'I am greatly indebted to you,' wrote back De Morgan gravely, 'for drawing my attention to a useful fact in Natural History, in which I am deplorably ignorant.'

But the persistent, and to him grievous, trouble which he encountered was the necessity for the compression of a long narrative into one volume. 'I am quite willing to admit that my method is all wrong,' he wrote humbly once, when urged to write shorter books, 'but I am convinced that nothing will be gained, and much lost, by forcing it into a channel unnatural to it.' Had he written in the days to which he rightfully belonged, when a three-volume novel was the vogue, this trouble would not have existed; as it was, he was eternally distracted by petitions from his readers that he would insist on Mr. Heinemann publishing his books in larger type, and petitions from Mr. Heinemann that, to make this possible, he should abbreviate his work in a manner which he felt would confuse the issues in his own mind and wreck it from an artistic standpoint.

'I am strongly of opinion,' he wrote to Heinemann, 'that most modern literature would gain by judicious condensation *and expansion*. But my experience is that the latter is the best remedy for dragging. Nothing is so good as judicious insertion! If only that injudicious blue pencil could draw together and heal up the gap it leaves so as not to upset the apple-cart in the next Chapter, no one would welcome it more than I. But the author has to re-read and correct all the rest of his book at every excision; and nobody else can ever read his MS. with an impartial eye to help him, because the critic sees the pencil-mark and is biased.'

On one occasion Heinemann sent a manuscript back to him with an earnest petition that he would condense it. De Morgan set to work conscientiously to comply with this request; but as he re-read the story, it seemed to him that it lacked little touches here and there to perfect it, and he worked away happily adding these in till he found that, instead of shortening the book, he had increased the original length by four hundred pages with material which now seemed too essential to be omitted. 'But

after all,' he wrote soothingly to Heinemann, 'try to feel it's only like your publishing two books at once!'

Another time, when Mr. Lawrence likewise urged the advisability of compression, De Morgan pointed out that it would be infinitely less trouble to himself to start afresh and write an entirely new book, than to maul the completed manuscript. 'I have usually found,' he complained, 'that three lines taken out in one place have let me in for six inserted elsewhere to make a passage intelligible'; and he adds:—

'It seems to me that my books are giving a deal of trouble! But this Solomon is not only good-tempered—but really grateful for plain, straightforward criticism. It can't be too clear and direct because then it franks him in directness of yea and nay.

'As to mere cutting out of paragraphs, all I can say is, *try one*! Don't blue-pencil the place and leave the author to heal the gap up—have the two ends re-typed in context, with proper commas and things.

'I let a friend loose once on Chapter I of *Joe Vance* with a blue pencil, and asked for the phrases to be read aloud as amended—I declined to help—and no conclusion was come to!

'I could show you four pages of *Alice-for-Short* that wavered under the blue-pencil because they "dragged," and were afterwards reprinted *en bloc* with special eulogy in *Public Opinion*! Shows how hard it is for an author to judge.

'But I can't decline to help this time, or be the least cantankerous—only *I must be convinced*—I can't cut out anything I think juicy. Much sooner start on a new one!'[1]

'I have always been greatly struck by the essayist in De

[1] To readers of *Alice-for-Short* it may be of interest to know exactly what he eliminated in that novel. To Heinemann he wrote:—

'I have done my best with *Alice-for-Short*. It is most difficult to make any substantial reduction in bulk without sacrificing some feature in the story. No doubt it would be possible to tell the same tale without the Ghosts being Alice's ancestors, or to introduce Margaret and Dr. Johnson as a married couple without saying how they became so. I dare say fifty pages might be won by either of these expedients and three months recasting. But I don't think either comes into practical politics.

'What I have actually sacrificed is as follows:

'(1) The chapter at the end. Its substance, cut down, has been added to Chapter 23, Vol. 2.

'(2) The bulk of the legal discussion, retaining little beyond the will.

'(3) All I could spare of the Heath household's meal-times, and the opposition of his relatives to Charles's marriage.

'(4) Much psychical Research, and 3,000 or 4,000 words of miscellaneous excision.

'With regard to what I have added it amounts to, say, twenty pages of *Joseph Vance* print, and fills out a grievous hiatus in the story. On reading straight through the whole aloud to my wife, both of us were disgusted at the way Charles's meeting with Alice after the small-pox was ignored. The tale jumped on from the picnic at Shellacombe to the Bedlam epoch leaving poor Alice in the hospital. It was too unkind. However, I have made it all warm and comfortable now by adding the short chapter which is Chapter XXXIV of one Vol. It would not do to omit it. The discontinuity was too painful.'

Morgan's novels,' wrote Mr. Shaw Sparrow. 'Narrative is constantly being delayed by the essayist, who is a chatty, charming, humorous and witty observer, with a marvellous eye for the detail that counts. Critics when impatient with the length of his books invariably forget the essayist, as though story-writing alone interested them. If the essays in De Morgan were collected I think that Charles Lamb would have a rival.'

The hackneyed criticism that he was too prolix was, however, occasionally met by De Morgan with a gentle effrontery. 'Well,' he observed, after reading a passage to this effect, 'I stopped reading for forty years, and now that I have taken to writing, I find other people's books *so long*!'

When Heinemann urged him to write some personal reminiscences in order to gratify the curiosity of his insatiable readers, he replied: 'The matter is settled for me by the fact that my undertakings have overtaken me, and I mustn't add to them; but I hope I shall not seem an intransigeant person if I say at once Reminiscences would be out of the question. Too many people are still living—I should be in hot water in no time—and I'm not cut out for that sort of work. I find I live in a cold perspiration as it is whenever I come to London. And whatever chance there is of screwing another Joe or Alice out of this fatigued and disordered brain would be gone for good! My proper business is to use my residuum of invention on what my friends who have read Joe and Alice are asking for—viz., more of the same sort. There won't be a-many years at the most to employ it on.'

'I have in vain besought my reviewers,' he wrote on another occasion, 'to invent whatever they like about me, but not to bother me with data. Wingéd words of this sort need not have the solemnity of law documents. What earthly use is a substratum of fact? It's of no use, for instance, my correcting the story that the MS. of *Joseph Vance* was typed after a publisher rejected it, and that another publisher took it in consequence of my typist weeping over it! In point of fact, I never trust a MS. out of my hand till it exists in duplicate.' To a friend who succeeded in interviewing him, he wrote:—

'I know you will excuse my saying candidly that I object unappeasedly to the *interview* form? . . . However, I have no objection to the publication of what you have written if it is distinctly understood not to contain a single correction of my own writing. . . . I understand the rule of the game in Press-notices of this sort to be that they need be accurate only in an Impressionist sense. This is rather like Mrs. Wilfer's celebrated reservation. When she used the word attractive she did it "with this reservation, that I meant it in no sense whatever."

As he drifted into a settled routine of work, he kept to the hours which, throughout his life, he had been used to devote to art. He thus wrote from dawn to dusk, and sometimes

occasionally in the evening. 'I am very stay-at-home-ative!' he explained in consequence. His own impression was that he wrote very slowly; but, judging by the result, this could not have been the case. Interruptions never fretted him. When these occurred, however inopportunely, he laid his pen aside with unruffled amiability, and later resumed the broken train of thought without effort. 'I find that the mere holding of a pen makes me think,' he said. 'The pen even seems to have some consciousness of its own! It can certainly *begin* the work. Then I forget all about it, and go on wheresoever thought or the characters lead me. I think I work best in Florence, where it is always quiet, and where there is something stimulating in the air. Yet weather does not affect me, as all my work is indoors.' His handwriting was very legible and his manuscripts, in consonance with his disbelief in revision, show few corrections, save, here and there, excisions of entire paragraphs.

Mr. Bram Stoker, after a visit to the Vale, relates, 'Mr. De Morgan is extremely reticent—indeed almost shy—in speaking of himself or his work. . . . He is the most modest of men. It was only in answer to direct queries that he would unfold anything of himself or his memories. But he is a most kindly and genial man, of a very sweet and sympathetic nature—as indeed any reader of that work can discern. As we chatted in his little study looking out into the garden—large for a house so near the heart of London—his natural diffidence wore away and he revealed himself. New light came into his mind from old memories, illuminating thoughts expressed themselves in an atmosphere of colour—natural to a man who had spent some forty years as a worker in picturesque designing and manufacture.

'"I had a great struggle," De Morgan explained, "to get *Joseph Vance* coherent at the end. I really thought at one time that I had got into a muddle from which there could be no extrication. Happily that was not so with *Alice-for-Short*. In that case all went through very easily."'

'I suppose,' Mr. Stoker suggested, 'that the power of plot-making develops with exercise and experience?'

He smiled as he replied, 'That is so—as far as my experience carries me. In my first book that branch of the art of novel-writing was wrought by the sweat of my brow. I had to think of everything, foresee everything—as far as I could. But even then there were a sad lot of loose ends and ragged edges; all of which had to be carefully laboured over till some sort of unity of idea of the whole thing was achieved, in so far as it was in me to do it. When I began *Alice-for-Short* I found the value of all this labour. Things began somehow to settle themselves, and to fall into line in a natural way. It seemed to me as if the

mechanical power of one's mind was getting adjusted to its new work. After all, a great deal of this part of the work is scientific —logic based on mathematics. And a good deal of my early life was spent in these studies. I inherited perhaps some of the faculty, or at least I should have, for I come from a mathematical and logical family.'

Mr. Bram Stoker proceeded to question him about his character-creation. 'Do your characters come from your brain fully fledged, like Minerva, or do they grow from small beginnings and become more and more real as the story progresses?'

'The latter altogether. So far as I can remember—for it is hard to recollect the exact beginnings of characters—the process is a sort of nebulous idea with a concrete heart somewhere in the midst. A heart which can from the first illuminate in some degree, and which can beat in time, and grow more and more and more vital till at the last it emerges from the mist. And then, strangely enough, you are not astonished when you find that the creature which has newly declared itself is a friend of your lifetime—of your dreams. When this point is reached the characters often act, and even speak, for themselves. At times it seems as if one can almost hear their very words.'

'Do they ever,' Mr. Stoker asked, 'get away from you at this stage; do they ever take, so to speak, the bit in their teeth and bolt?'

'I wouldn't undertake to say that they don't; and I must say that I don't object when they do. For this often leads to a new line of thought. It seems to me often that it is such divergencies that make for the freshness of a story. After all, if the characters are true to nature, with just that soupçon of individuality—even if it is eccentric—which makes people interesting in real life, such can have a charm of their own in literature. And if these imaginary characters have fictional life why should they not use it fictionally—in their own way. We talk now and again of fictional characters as "living." Surely it is this quality, if any, which makes them so.'

Thus, as De Morgan wrote, he did not attempt to create a plot, nor had he any idea when he was writing one page what the next would be. 'My ideas of what will happen,' he explained, 'are only distinct by accident, occasionally.' He believed absolutely in the reality of his puppets, and he waited with a complete sense of impotence to see what they would do next. 'How is the story going?' his wife would ask him when he came down to luncheon. 'I am rather distressed, I am so afraid they are going to quarrel,' he would answer sometimes; and later in the day when she asked again, he would perhaps reply happily, 'After all, I don't know if they will come to a quarrel—I must wait to see what they will do.' Only rarely did

Dish, saucer-shaped, painted in ruby and yellow lustre with an antelope standing in front of an apple tree; below are two fishes.
Diameter 14⅝ inches.
[*At the Victoria & Albert Muscum, London*

he become worried when the plot would not reveal itself. For instance, when he was writing *Alice-for-Short*, he was asked one day how he was getting on. 'Not at all,' he responded plaintively, 'the heroine has been hanging over a precipice for three days, and I don't know what on earth she will decide to do next!'

In all matters he followed the trend of his inspiration blindly, and only subsequently tried to ascertain if his fiction was in accordance with fact. Such investigation appealed to his innate love of analysis, and doctors, lawyers, scientists were, in turn, eagerly consulted by him on technical points, with the result that he invariably proved the accuracy of what he had described in complete ignorance. For instance, having related how Jane Verrinder, on resuming consciousness, took up the threads of life from the precise juncture at which she had laid them down—even to continuing the remarks which she had been about to make when her accident occurred—he was much interested in the following letter from a famous authority on lunacy:—

Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., F.R.S., to William De Morgan.

'DUMFRIES, N.B.

'Prolonged trance and subliminal periods of existence have often been employed in fiction, generally, I think, in a way that does not commend itself to the medical mind. The truth is, such matter is often more wonderful than anything that imagination has conceived. Had I time I could send you some curious cases of trance dug out of old medical and surgical literature. I suppose you have heard of Astley Cooper's case in which a naval officer who suffered a depression of the skull from a grape-shot in an action in the Mediterranean at the moment when he was issuing an order remained totally unconscious for many months, in which state he was brought home, and who, when operated on in London and the depressed bone being raised, completed the order he had been uttering when he was struck down many months before. He took up his conscious life at the exact moment when it had been interrupted.

'I remember making an interesting visit to Bethlem many years ago with the late Miss Lungard, an actress of great ability, to enable her to study a particular form of insanity, Melancholia, which she portrayed in *Called Back*, a successful play founded on a successful novel. The public fancied it was unnatural, but it was really a wonderful study of a special form of mental aberration!'

In short, while writing, De Morgan was like a man groping in the dark and trying to discover how people of whose existence he had become aware were about to act, till, slowly but surely, the knowledge came to him. One curious feature of his novels, however, gradually impressed him as remarkable. After he had written some incident which he believed to be entirely fictitious—possibly even too fantastic for credence—not only did he discover that it might have happened, but in several instances he discovered that it *had* happened, or a parallel to it in real life occurred shortly after he had told his story. It was as though he had set himself up as a brain centre to which had gravitated

facts whereof he could have had no actual knowledge or premonition.

Passing over the chance which might easily be accounted for of his having chosen the name of a living author for his first book, it will be remembered how pathetically he described the incident just referred to in *Alice-for-Short* when Mr. Verrinder for half a century lived within sight of the madhouse where his young bride had been incarcerated. This romance was pure fiction to De Morgan when he wrote it, yet he afterwards discovered that the tragic story had had an actual counterpart in real life, in a bygone generation, when a man took lodgings adjacent to an asylum, and lived and died waiting vainly for the return to sanity of the wife who was doomed to a living death within its walls.

Again, in connexion with his third novel, published in 1908, several curious coincidences occurred; but it is first necessary to glance at the origin and the outline of that plot.

'I had written a tale,' De Morgan said, 'which I liked and my wife didn't; and she said to me, "Why can't you write a story with an ordinary beginning?" I said, "What sort?" She said, "Well, for instance, '*It was his last tuppence and he spent it in the tuppenny tube!*'" Said I, "An admirable beginning!" I put my story in hand straight away, and began writing what is now Chapter II of the book—Chapter I was written long after to square it all up!'

Solely from the chance suggestion of that sentence, De Morgan evolved the plot of *Somehow Good*—or, as his American readers called it, '*Somehow awfully Good*': a tale which, he stated, 'was written and even the typescript completed before 1905.' It was a story which, dealt with less delicately and deftly than he handled it, could have been repellent. 'One can imagine—if given to nightmares,' remarks a critic, 'what the modern realist, who is forbidden to mention the scent of violets so long as there are garbage cans to enjoy, would have made of it.'

A young girl, Rosalind, going out to India to be married, falls a victim to a man who abuses the hospitality and guardianship that had been offered to her *en route* by his wife. In consequence, she and her young husband 'Gerry' eventually separate before the birth of the child of whom he is not the father; and for years neither knows what has become of the other. Then, by a freak of fate, Gerry, journeying in England, all unwittingly meets Rosalind's daughter, Sally, now grown up into a lively, beautiful damsel; and, travelling in the same compartment with her in the underground, he has an accident for which she is indirectly responsible. Stooping to pick up a half-crown she had dropped, he encounters a live wire, and, partially electrocuted, loses his memory. Sally impulsively makes herself responsible for the

unfortunate stranger; and when her mother, in that unknown man 'Fenwick,' recognizes the husband of her youth thus strangely restored to her, she silently acquiesces in Sally's erratic action.

Two years later Rosalind and Gerry re-marry, she with full cognizance of the past, he unaware of it, owing to continued loss of memory. The return of that memory bit by bit, the final shock of the complete realization of the past, and his rescue by Sally from the sea into which he had fallen half-dazed, constitute an enthralling story, enhanced by many side-issues—Sally's love-affair with 'Dr. Prosy,' her friend Tishy's elopement with the young haberdasher from Cattley's, the Indian Colonels who had known Rosalind in her youth, and the terrible mother of Dr. Prosy and prospective mother-in-law of Sally whom De Morgan feelingly describes as a 'goosling Goody' or an 'Octopus.' Moreover, throughout the whole, one never misses the *motif* of the story—how 'Somehow, good will be the final goal of ill'; how Rosalind, despite that nightmare in the past, is a woman pure at heart, tender and true, and how, strange thought! beautiful, laughing Sally has sprung into being out of that bygone horror—like a lovely flower born from a dung-hill!

'Where would those eyes be, conspirators with the lids above them and the merry fluctuations of the brows; where would those lips be, from which the laughter never quite vanished, even as the ripple of the ocean's edge tries how small it can get, but never dies outright; where the great coils of black hair that would not go inside any ordinary oilskin swimming-cap; where the incorrigible impertinence and flippancy we never liked to miss a word of; where, in short, would Sally be if she had never emerged from that black shadow in the past?

'Easy enough to say, had she not done so, something else quite as good might have been. Very likely. How can we limit the possible to the conditional—præter-pluperfect tense? But then, you see, it wouldn't have been Sally! That's the point.'

De Morgan himself used to declare that he had fallen in love with 'Sallykins,' and that he was not responsible for her often reprehensible conduct. 'She simply goes her own way and does whatever she likes with me!' He had at first intended to call the story 'The Grooves of Time'; later he decided to name it 'His Horrible Baby.' 'The phrase,' he says, 'comes from Chapter 43, after Fenwick's question to his wife, "What became of the baby?" My wife thinks the title quite an inspiration on its merits. I myself think it *gists* the novel most concisely. But also it drags the unpleasant side into the light. . . .'

Nevertheless this name was afterwards abandoned for the reason indicated; and De Morgan once remarked that the passage in his three novels which he would like to be remembered by was that following Rosalind's recognition by her long-lost husband. When Professor Phelps concluded his criticism of

De Morgan's writing with a quotation from that episode, De Morgan wrote to him: 'Do you know, you have wound up your article with the passage I myself look upon as doing me more credit than almost anything else in all the books!' Both critic and criticized understood that in the simplicity with which that crucial situation is treated lies its strength. The climax towards which all the story had been tending is dismissed in a few words with a power in their reticence which pages of laboured description would have lacked. 'What became of the baby? . . . *The* baby—*his* baby—*his* horrible baby!' 'Gerry darling! Gerry *dearest*! do think!'

On the publication of the book De Morgan wrote to Heinemann with delight both over its reception and its tangible result:—

'Yours is a very gratifying letter indeed—I had no idea I was so wealthy! However I, of course, don't really know what the circulation of either book has been, either in England or America. It is all curiously and surprisingly satisfactory!

'The reviews are quite taking me aback. The *Pall Mall* I thought a particularly intelligent one. I see with a good deal of pleasure that the unpleasant part of the story takes its proper place as a mere essential to the plot. A good many readers will remain in the dark about it.'

The only adverse criticism, however, which the Press seemed at first inclined to formulate was that the story was lacking in plausibility since the electrocuting incident and its after-effects, on which the whole plot hinged, could not possibly have happened; indeed controversy on this point was already becoming heated, when, within a fortnight of the publication of the book, Mr. Heinemann sent De Morgan a newspaper cutting describing an exactly similar accident which had just occurred, with a similar result, in so far as loss of memory was involved. 'I think *Somehow Good* should prove the most in-the-nick book that ever was published,' De Morgan replied. 'Yet I myself, when I wrote about the electrocuting incident, believed it to be impossible!'

This coincidence was soon after followed by another. A letter came to De Morgan from a heart-broken mother asking him if his story had been founded on the disappearance of her son. A handsome youth, healthy and happy, the latter had mysteriously vanished beyond all trace, in circumstances strangely similar to those under which Fenwick was lost to view—after travelling by train with only a few shillings in his pocket—his disappearance being explicable only on the same grounds—a loss of memory.

A further and somewhat different illustration of De Morgan's unconscious veracity of description may also be cited here, although referred to in a letter belonging to a later date. His readers will remember how mischievous Sally—the 'Mer-pussy'

as he quaintly called her in view of her prowess in swimming—nearly lost her life when saving that of Fenwick, and how, all too graphically, were described the agonizing hours during which her fate hung in suspense and she—Sally of the saucy speech, the pearly teeth, the brilliant, mocking eyes—lay dead to love and laughter, while artificial respiration was tried in vain.

Charles Moores to William De Morgan.

'(PICKENS, MOORES, DAVIDSON & PICKENS,
'LEMCKE BUILDING, INDIANAPOLIS),
'*April* 5, 1914.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'It cannot interest you deeply to learn what a young thing of fifty odd summers thinks of your stories, but you will have to get a letter of appreciation from me, for, ever since *Joseph Vance* came out, I have been meaning to write it. I am just old enough to remember when people talked of Dickens's latest and waited eagerly for the next. And ever since the early 'eighties when I snatched the first copy of each new book by R. L. S. and read it first, I have had the joy and disappointment of watching for the next big thing that was to be written. I can re-read *Joseph Vance* with thorough enjoyment. But oh, for the joy of reading it for the first time! It makes me think of the sonnet on Chapman's Homer and "stout Cortez" standing upon his impossible peak in Darien. *Alice-for-Short* and *Somehow Good* brought some of that same joy. And now, *When Ghost Meets Ghost*, in the same delicate, delicious vein as *Joseph Vance*, simply impels me to write and tell you about it. It is so bravely long, too. Other writers are afraid to write so long a story. Thank Heaven you are not! I wish it were twice as big.

'As I have read each of your stories and found every time—isn't it so with every one of them?—the terrible reality with which your idea of drowning is brought in, I have wondered what personal experience must have given the origin to it. Having gone through the experience in my own boyhood I feel that you could not have made it so real, and therefore so dreadful, unless you had shut your own eyes upon the surrounding waters for what seemed to be the last time and gone on into unconsciousness. This, of course, is unimportant beside the greater things you have done, but it is one of many proofs that your pictures of life are the real thing. To have known such sweetness as Lossie and Gwen and Sally, and to have understood the heart of a little child, and to have given this to the rest of us is to have really lived. I love your people and wish I knew you. The world will be happier for many a year because of what you have given it. Will you pardon my assurance in thus thanking you for my share in the gift?

'Sincerely yours,
'CHARLES W. MOORES.'

William De Morgan to Charles W. Moores.

'VIALE MILTON N. 31,
'FLORENCE,
'ITALY,
'19/4/14.

'DEAR MR. MOORES,—

'Thank you very much for your letter. I cannot tell you how much pleasure it is to me to know that my books are giving real satisfaction. It is the sort of thing that comes back to one to solace a sleepless night, wherefrom I sometimes suffer—but happily seldom.

'Your confirmation of my references to drowning is particularly interesting, because all I say on the subject is *theory*. I have never been nearer drowning than having to hold my breath longer than I expected on coming up from a deep dive. But the terrible misgiving that I should not get to the top in time was quite enough. That my views should strike anyone who had gone through it as true reminds me of a letter I once had from a gentleman who had all but gone off a precipice into the sea like *Alice-for-Short* and her friend the doctor, and had been saved in the same way. He wanted to know when and where I had been in a like pickle to know so much about it. I ascribe my success in dealing with these (to me) unknown terrors to a fine rich constitutional cowardice. It is the same faculty that makes me image the passage of a motor-car over the body of any of my family who is half an hour late. I could do without a good deal of this faculty, as far as comfort goes, but I don't think my books would benefit.

'I hope I may manage yet one more before I join those among whom many will be found whose resuscitation from drowning failed, some of whom will, I hope, remember enough about it to confirm (or contradict) my text further. And also that you may live to read it.

'Thanks again—from,

'Yours very truly,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

Shortly after the publication of *Somehow Good*, De Morgan found himself involved in controversy with various ardent Roman Catholics who objected to certain inaccuracies in his description of the celebration of the Mass. The passage complained of describes how Fenwick, still suffering from loss of memory, goes with Rosalind on their honeymoon into Rheims Cathedral and is present at what he terms the *Messe des paresseux* 'because the lazy people don't come to Mass till ten.'

'It was easy to put it all away and forget it in the hush and gloom of the great church, filled with the strange intonation from Heaven-knows-where—some side-chapel unseen—of a Psalm it would have puzzled David to be told was his, and a scented vapour Solomon would have known at once; for neither myrrh nor frankincense have changed one whit since his day. It was easy enough so long as both sat listening to *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax*. Carried *nem. con.* by all sorts and conditions of Creeds. But when the little bobs and tokens and skirt adjustments of the fat priest and his handsome abettor (a young fellow some girl might have been the wife of, with advantage to both) came to a pause, and the congregation were to be taken into confidence, how came Gerry to know beforehand what the fat one was going to say, with that stupendous voice of his?

'"*Hoc est corpus meum, et hic est calix sanguinis mei.* We all kneel, I think." Thus the bridegroom under his breath. . . .

'And then the plot thickened at the altar, and the odour of myrrh and frankincense, and little bells rang to a climax, and the handsome young priest, let us hope, felt he had got value for the loss of that hypothetical girl.'

'Unfortunately,' laments De Morgan, 'trusting in my faulty memory and in the *Penny Encyclopædia*, I put the wrong words into this priest's mouth or the right words at the wrong moment, and endowed him with excellent lungs.' His cousin Miss Seeley,

however, arranged that the misguided author should meet a Roman Catholic priest, Father Nolan, in order to correct any essential errors of which he had been guilty; and the genial Irish divine and the grateful heretic passed a cheery evening in each other's society to which both subsequently reverted with delight.

'I felt my position acutely,' De Morgan afterwards related, 'when an orthodox Catholic pointed out to me what I had done. "It really is rather unjust," said this gentleman, whose attitude of forbearance was most praiseworthy, "that when for centuries we have been accused of 'mumbling our hocus-pocus' a novel-writer should represent a priest turning to the congregation and shouting, 'Hoc est Corpus Meum!' in a stentorian voice." I explained that my attitude during more services of the Mass than I could count had been a happy combination of inattention with respect, and that I had acted on information received—like the police when they made a raid on a betting house. No doubt the description of the service which I had relied on was written by "a pagan suckled in a Creed outworn." He asked me why I had not invested a small sum in a Roman prayer-book, and I felt that I had not a leg to stand upon. I had to confess to an egregious blunder, but I did what I could to the passage in the second edition. And as an *amende honorable* I called the officiating priest big, instead of fat; and thus, I hope, averted the thunders of the Vatican.'

William De Morgan to Miss Seeley.

'1 The Vale,
'King's Road,
'Chelsea.

'My dear Fanny,—

'This is partly to repeat what a very pleasant time we had, and partly to ask you to pass on a message to Father Nolan.

'Tell him I am glad to find that I was not altogether deceived in forgetting that I had made the priest shout "Hoc est Corpus meum" aloud to the congregation. Because the text does not warrant that interpretation, of necessity. In fact, I remember distinctly that when I wrote, "the congregation were to be taken into confidence," I associated the phrase in my mind only with the showing of the bread and the chalice; *not* with the speech, which I supposed to have been complete by then.

'The words "hoc est Corpus" following as they do after "with that stupendous voice of his" seem to mean dramatically more than they actually do. Fenwick speaks them—not the priest at all. But I note that Fenwick or Rosalind, whichever described the scene to the author, must have made some confusion of the time at which the congregation knelt.

'I have taken this said author to task for his graceless attitude on religion. He tries to sneak out by saying that it is religious engineering that provokes his spleen, not any form of feeling towards our Cause. He prefers acquiescence himself, he says, but *chacun a son gout*. He says,

however, that he has cut out whole pages of horrible impiety because he wouldn't hurt the feelings of any fellow wanderers in Infinity—in uniform or out of it.

'Do you know he says he altered the expression on p. 180, "A visible certainty" from "as *chic* as you please," entirely from respect for the present Pope. Love to your Mammy.

'Your affect. Coz,

'W.'

De Morgan, however, was fated not to hear the last of his theological *faux pas* for a considerable time; and so late as 1913 a priest, Father Vassall Phillips, sustained a long correspondence with him in order to emphasize the lamentable ignorance on technical points of ritual which, in spite of revision in later editions, the book still displayed, 'and which,' he laid stress upon, 'is the more remarkable in a writer like you who *photographs* life with the greatest accuracy, as well as delicacy of touch.'

The crucial points of complaint were:—

1. The employment by De Morgan of the word 'et' in the sentence of consecration, '*Hoc est corpus meum et hic*,' etc., which suggests that the two consecrations are conjoined instead of being one only.
2. That the expression 'his handsome abettor' implied there was only one principal 'abettor,' whereas there are always two taking part in the service, the Deacon and Sub-deacon, who genuflect together.
3. That no one, excepting Fenwick in the text, ever called Mass at ten o'clock *Messe des paresseux*.
4. That incense is never offered at the recital of psalms in the morning.
5. 'And *then* the plot thickened at the altar and the bells rang to a climax,' etc. The 'climax' in the Mass is the consecration, and in Rome they never ring any bells at Mass after the Consecration.

Father Vassall Phillips further pointed out that 'No Catholic layman (not one, at least, in a million) knows the Words of Consecration, or would ever dream of repeating them to his wife, if he did know them'; while a final and more serious statement made by De Morgan in private correspondence he dwelt on at great length. For De Morgan, perhaps recalling his father's definition of himself and his family as 'Christians unattached,' had observed in one of his letters, 'I doubt whether any minister of Religion would "class" me as a Christian, and I do not "class" myself at all.' 'People,' stated the Priest, 'who say they do not wish to "class" themselves either do not *wish* to believe or *have not taken the trouble to examine the evidences*,' [twice underlined].

The reticence displayed by De Morgan in his rejoinder requires no comment, nor the *finesse* and quiet humour with which he parries the thrusts of a controversialist possibly incapable of understanding his own limitations or of appreciating the humility of an outlook less positive than his own.

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA, S.W.
'*Oct.* 26, 1913.

'DEAR FATHER VASSALL PHILLIPS,—

'I hasten to exonerate myself as to *point* 1 in yours of Oct. 1. The following is carefully copied from the article "Mass" in the *Penny Cyclop*: 1839.

'"... the priest consecrates the bread and wine, repeating the words: 'Hoc est corpus meum, *et* hic est calix sanguinis mei,' and then shows to the people both the bread and the chalice containing the wine, upon which all the congregation kneel down."

'I need hardly say that I do not cite the P.C. as an authority about the Sacraments, in opposition to what you tell me. But to be as accurate as the P.C. is sufficient for the "poor scribbler of an empty day." It is a high standard for such a one! *Especially if not one lay Catholic in a million knows the words of Consecration.*

'A word about "et." If it "suggests that the two consecrations are conjoined," does not its omission suggest that they are *identical*? Or was Virgil's Latin uncanonical, in the fourth century?

'"*Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras Hoc opus, hic labor est.*"

'Virgil can scarcely have meant that the *opus* was "*revocare gradum*," and the *labor* "*evadere ad auras.*" It seems to me (only I am a very modest Latinist) that total distinction would call for "*hoc* est corpus ... et *ille* est calix."

'(2) I agree with you that my text *might* be taken to imply that there was only one "abettor"—a handsome one—but that was not my intention. Probably Rosalind only looked at the handsome one.

'(3) What Fenwick said, thought, or remembered at that moment is the only speech, thought, or memory that comes into question.

'(4) I thought I had smelt incense (in the Duomo at Florence) *before* a high mass at the altar in the central enclosure. I suppose I was mistaken.

'(5) No doubt Father Nolan pointed out this error, which I will examine again when I get a copy of my first impression. But I had no recollection of making the alteration, when I wrote, and I have none now. One forgets.

'If the character you give the Catholic laity (ut supra) is deserved, I doubt if reference to *any* lay Catholic would be of much use for revision of the blunders of an ignoramus.

'Also, one is often misinformed, even by specialists. I removed a Polar Bear (in *It Never Can Happen Again*) from the South Pole to the North, under the instruction of a number of correspondents who *knew* there were none in Antarctica. Later on, I met a man who had travelled to near the South Pole, and put the case to him. He said: "Your correspondents may have means of knowing what they say to be true—but *I* won't answer for it! Put your bear back again in the next edition." I have since read that seals' bodies have been found at the South Pole with the marks on them of white bears' teeth.

'An illustration is suggested by what you say about what a Christian is. Suppose I touched this point in a work of fiction, I should have to make choice of a definition. I could accept yours, or I could accept such a one as I suppose Sir Isaac Newton (for instance) would have given. But I could not use both. I should be at a standstill, like Buridan's proverbial ass between two bundles of hay. Sir Isaac was, I believe, a Unitarian. You hold that Jesus the Galilean was Almighty God. I am not in a position to gainsay this. For anything I know to the contrary,

it may be the case. But neither am I qualified to deny some hundreds of other definitions of Christianity.

'I think (by your underlining of some words at the end of your letter) that you have classed me with "those who have not taken the trouble to examine the evidences." Is not that the case?

'I have given you as much to read as is warrantable! Excuse the length.

'Yours very truly,
'WILLIAM DE MORGAN.'

Thus, apparently, closed a correspondence of unusual interest, defining as it does the mental attitude of two men whose traditions and training were so opposed as that of the Philosopher and the Priest—the man absorbed in problems and the man sworn to eschew them. 'I have no antipathy to any beliefs of other people,' De Morgan once wrote; 'I merely take exception to the recitation of Creeds.' Yet although the arbitrary acceptance of any stereotyped dogma could not appeal to a man of De Morgan's mental equipment, of his very temperament he clung to the belief in some guiding Spirit of the Universe who had decreed the existence of a Future wherein all should be 'Somehow Good.'

And there was one problem with which he was ever more constantly confronted; for as the trend of life's journey begins to be downhill, the years mark ever more persistently the toll which they claim from the affections and friendships of earlier days. Death crosses the pathway more frequently ere that final day when he stands, a barrier to our own progress, with the fiat 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.'

One of the first copies of his new novel had been dispatched by De Morgan to Lady Burne-Jones; and a few days later, hearing of the death of her brother-in-law, he wrote as follows:—

William De Morgan to Lady Burne-Jones.

'FLORENCE,
'*Feb.* 16*th*, 1908.

'MY DEAR GEORGIE,—

'I was promising myself yesterday at the Villa, where we spent Saturday evg., to come back here to-day and write you a cheerful letter without a flaw on its horizon. This morning I lighted on the grievous news of your family loss in the *Times*, and it has knocked the heart out of me for writing cheerfully.

'I know Alfred Baldwin was as a brother in your family, although I don't think he and I met more than half a dozen times—if that! But—to be taken away like this—at an age I sometimes think must be young in spite of traditions! However it's the great old subject words bring no nearer to a clearness. Sometimes I think if words would leave Death alone, his face would look less forbidding.

'I write pen-free of all conventionality to you—we have known so much of each other's troubles—and this line will do as it stands to place us among those who share your grief and your sister's . . . all our sympathies go with it. . . .

'Write, so, when you've read the book, and tell me *exactly* how the philosophy of it (if so grand an expression may be allowed) strikes you. Some of the reviewers have caught the idea.

'The book is, I believe, flying through the press—6,000 were ordered *anticipatamente*, and a second issue is in hand already. I often think of how all your readings of the typed Joseph Vance were what set me going straight on with a second—gave me backbone for it. It has been a strange story.'

And only the next month De Morgan was penning a yet sadder expression of sympathy on that subject which 'words bring no nearer to clearness.' He loved children—who that has read his books can fail to see how he entered into the brain and being of his little dream-children?—and when he received a letter telling him of a mother who had lost her little daughter, he wrote in the fulness of his heart:—

'*27th March*, 1908.

'MY DEAR MAISIE DOWSON,—

'I have just had the most heartbreaking letter from Lawrence, telling me. Really I can hardly bear to think of it—it is too cruel—there was I only the other day writing to you not knowing, and joking, for all I remember, about this darling little thing—and all the time it was *this*!

'I could not write at all about it, only now I have got so old and horny with constant news of death that I care little how I word the old tale—*your grief is my grief too*—tells it in a phrase.

'But more and more, the nearer I get to my own exit, I suspect that there *must be* a sun in the background—somewhere in the worst of the dark, if we knew where to look for it. It is only a suspicion—but then it is a suspicion of a fact—and that's better than a full-blown hope of an uncertainty—not very clear, I know, but forgive it. My suspicions crept into Joe Vance—you remember?—and I don't expect ever to counter-write them—in fact they strengthen, it may be mere cowardice that keeps them stunted.

'Still, this expedition of the soul through existence does seem ill-organized, as far as this world goes—perhaps the total means to show up better—that's the chance!

'My next letter but one or two, must be to Egypt, about a gravestone—*for Mary*, I had nearly written—but that contains the current ideas of interment—and they are not mine.

'If no further change occurs to either, we shall meet in June. Till then I can only send best wishes for the best that may be—for there is always a low-grade best left for us.'

Meanwhile, as *Sally* made her triumphal progress through the press, De Morgan received appreciations alike from friends and strangers, a few of which may be quoted here:—

Lady Tennant to William De Morgan.

'34 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, S.W.,
'*Feb.* 14, 1908.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'You will have known that my waiting to acknowledge your most kind thought in sending me your book was only in order that I should the better be able to say Thank you, having read it. And now I have finished

it, alas, and can sit down and say Thank you most thoroughly. Oh, I have enjoyed it. And I am so indebted to you for writing such altogether beautiful and lovable books.

'Of course, it is full of most particular bits, your books always are, bits that one thinks as one reads, "Now *there's* what I've always noticed!" or "Now that's what I like best of all." . . . It is all delightful, all most welcome and *so* much loved in this family! Things have come to be spoken of, little things noticed and known as De Morganisms, now. And when my husband reads aloud to me, I am in a continuous simmer of laughter and comfortable amusement. I think you must be very glad and grateful to have done so much.

'Of course, Sally is complete. But Tishy is so amusing and pleasant too, and her name so nice. And the phrase I think that I like even best of *all* is the old Goody who wobbles down upon you like a hen, and goosles at you. That I prize enormously. Then *how* much I like such things as "cows that didn't mind how long they waited at it, having time on their hands"—and then of course the "Warrp" to the horse "who was trying to eat himself and dig the road up." All these things make the reading of your books a joy and the last page almost a sorrow—and I keep looking round for the people, and wondering where they are, and missing them. So you see, I do love your books.

'But would Sally, being the great dear she was—and the heart of candour, would she—feeling there was something in her mother's life she had never been talked to about—would she have asked other people about it?—tried to find out from the other old Major, for instance? Would she not have felt, if her mother didn't speak to her about it, she wouldn't care to ask about it or hear of it from anyone *else*? I can't help feeling it unlike her. I can more readily imagine her asking her mother straight out. But this is only a little feeling. I have suddenly remembered the phrase dealing with the "office staff at Cattley's, who were none of them Hottentots, but the contrary," and the Sales-Wilson *ménage*, and the bit that observes "that most awakening of incidents, a person determined not to disturb you." How is it you have not only been able to observe life so well and kindlily, but also so funnily, and altogether amazingly?

'Then how lovely the thought is in the line, "it would make all the difference just to see her there, alive, and leagues away in dreamland." It is what I have felt often when I go up to see the children asleep, they are there, close to one, yet leagues away.

'But I am sending this to Mr. Heinemann, and at the same time asking him to send you a copy of the little book I wrote for children this Xmas. It is only a *very* small return for so much pleasure given through your books.

'I am,
'Yours very gratefully,
'PAMELA TENNANT.'

William De Morgan to Lady Tennant.

'18 *Feb.* 1908.

'It's myself is indeed "glad and grateful" to get letters like yours—though indeed I get very few so well worded to touching point.

'It is so satisfactory to know that phrases I really hesitated to write lest they should be too overstrained (the goosling goody, e.g.) have found a haven and a ready recognition. It gives one the courage of one's convictions next time.

'I must tell you honestly I wavered a good deal before I decided that Sally hung fire of tackling her mother about her story. But I found she did it in my dream (so to explain it) and I let the dream have its way. I

QUEEN ELEANOR AND FAIR ROSAMOND
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

don't know how the story would have worked without her doing so. If I had forced this point it might all have worked out differently.

'We shall not be back till June, but will then come and say, "Come on board" at Queen Anne's Gate.

'I got your most enjoyable book about the pictures a good while ago—but now I shall just give away *my* copy, and treasure the one of your sending. Your folk-lore and the scent of hay-fields and the speech of country-life give me a mixed sense of Chaucer and White's *Selborne* hard to parallel elsewhere. The pictures are uncommonly well copied too—as good tricolours as I have seen.

'Please deal out kindest remembrances from us both to all of your family whom we can claim to know—a good several, and forgive a rapid scrawl by a hand that cannot always write as much as its owner would like to. This letter is a case in point.'

H. Marillier[1] *to William De Morgan.*

'*Feb. 22nd*, 1908.

'We have just begun *Somehow Good* and are enjoying it—at least I am, for my wife is still in the throes of *Joseph Vance*.

'I see nothing but your portraits now in the illustrated papers, and I expect it is hobnobbing with Church and Stage in the shop windows. I understand that a De Morgan Society has been formed in America with affiliated branches all over the world, and that the favourite tune on the barrel organs is a revival of that fine ancient ditty "De Morgan was a bloody buccaneer." The entire song was warbled to me over lunch the other day at the Bath Club by Sir Frank Swettenham (to whom I had lent *Alice*) and after several ladies had shown signs of collapse, we felt it judicious to leave the Club quietly.

The same to the same.

'*April 8th*, 1908.

'I have carried your letter about next my heart for weeks past intending to write and answer it, I have also been cherishing since the 28th of February last, a cutting about a ring, reminiscent of *Alice-for-Short* which came up in the earlier stages of what is still known as the "Cliff Mystery."

'You ask me which is earnest and which is joke about the "bloody buccaneer." The barrel organs were my own invention (I am not generally credited with having any). I believe the "De" was mine also. I haven't seen Sir Frank since. (He, by the way, is a sort of Bloody Buccaneer himself—the man who *made* Singapore peaceful. Have you read his *Unaddressed Letters*?—if not, do.)

'But I can dimly remember one gem-like verse from the ballad, which is probably in print somewhere.

'Him pull down de Church,
Him burn de organ,
Him ravish all de nuns, oh dear!
So now de debbil
Am sure of Morgan
Bloody, bloody, bloody buccaneer!

'I hope you and your lady flourish. We are just beginning to think of birds and beasts and flowers here. Daffodils out, and thrushes building in our eaves—or is that swallows? Marble Arch has become an oasis in a desert of wood pavement, like the statue of Mammon; Picture Sunday is over, and *Punch* has had a new joke on the subject, quite

[1] The Biographer of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

a good one. We are sending the newly-completed, long-belated " Passing of Venus " Tapestry to the New Gallery.

' But, lor, I expect you know more English news than we do ! '

In reference to this letter it may be added that De Morgan, perhaps on account of his descent from the buccaneer Archbishop of York, used always to declare facetiously that nature had intended him for a ' bold, bad buccaneer.' On one occasion when a lady had taken a snap-shot of him, he afterwards sent her one of his novels with the inscription :—

' *From the author, as a token of forgiveness for not snap-shotting him in the semblance of a buccaneer, which is what he would like to seem, but rather as a " kindly old gentleman," which is not his ambition. It may be his fault—who can say ?* '

Shortly after the publication of his third novel, De Morgan heard again from his old correspondent Mr. Vance, announcing :—

' Oddly enough (in view of the old *Joseph Vance* coincidence), our books were published within a week of one another, over here, mine appeared on the book-stands on February 1st, yours on the 8th. And of course the publishers' advance notices, milled through the intellectuals of newspaper literary editors, got beautifully mixed up. I saw only the other day a paragraph in some paper to the effect that the new book by Joseph Vance, author of *The Brass Bowl*, was to wear the curious title of *Somehow Good* ! I'd have sent you my book—but you'd be irritated by our simple-tonified spelling, and you won't care for it, partly because it's the same old story—Knock-down-and-set-'em-up-again—and partly because it wasn't written for the like o' you, but for quite another sort of reader—one who wants a drug, not a tonic.'

In most of the letters which passed between De Morgan and his ' literary godson '—a correspondence which extended over the space of ten years—a peculiar interest is attached to the confidences of those two authors who had been brought in contact by a strange coincidence while living so far sundered in locality, in age, and in the mentality that pervaded their work, which latter, however, was a difference of seeming only, created by the force of circumstance. ' If only I were on your review-ignoring altitude ! ' lamented Mr. Vance ; ' but for the present I have merely the satisfaction of knowing that I am the biggest frog in my own particular puddle.' And after reading Mr. Vance's latest publication, *The Black Bag*, De Morgan wrote :—

' It will excite the readers of whom you speak to madness, and they are numerous, and they ask to be excited. But I expect the author did not always feel the excitement. He knew the way to excite *them*, and did it, thoroughly. But the demands of their simple faith, that in Romance-land something always turns up in the nick, spoils the story for outsiders—*their* circles' outsiders. And all these last who read your book will say " Surely this shop has goods for me too—next week if not in stock to-day " . . . I see you have struck a vein, and they

will want the knock-down-and-set-'em-up-again, *ad libitum*. But you will live to do yourself justice, and I hope I shall be on this planet to see it. . . . Few could write these books and give so clearly as you do the impression of a *Hinterland* in the author's mind.'

And in response to Mr. Vance's plaint of brain-fag, he added:—

'Overstrain gives the brain no notice, I find. And I am glad that, this work having come to me very late, it has come in a form that leaves me free to throw down my pen at any moment. Half-a-dozen *Times*' leaders, under pressure in the small hours of the morning, would have sent me to the hospital. I hope, however, that a steady circulation of the books you have already out will secure your leisure for work on my happy public-ignoring line. I really never give a thought to the question whether my reader will complain or not. For all the wiggings I've had for spinning out and prosing I shall just go on doing it as much as I like. But then I *have* been lucky, and Heinemann has been angelic. Five hundred odd pages, and never a murmur! . . . Pleasant information reached me yesterday that 8,700 copies of *Alice* had been printed in England.'

Upon receipt of *Sally*, other of his former correspondents likewise wrote:—

Mrs. Fleming to William De Morgan.

'711, LOUDON STREET,
'CALCUTTA,
'*Feb. 27th*, 1908.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN (which a Dear you are—and ever will be—especially while you write such books),—

'From a sun-scorched and dust-laden city where flame flowered trees shed petals—like sparks without pity to fire every breeze—Gold mohur, red cassia, poincettia, hibiscus—(*mutabalis* sort), I send you all thanks for your letter, and *Alice-for-Short*.

'It's too hot for jingles, but I was going to write to you this week—in any case, because *Alice-for-Short* has at last reached a Calcutta library, having apparently rounded the Cape five times first—like old Madeira,—and I wanted to tell you how much I loved her and enjoyed her surroundings—and while that letter waited to materialize—lo! and behold—you send me *Somehow Good*. Therefore it was doubtless your brain wave that washed *Alice-for-Short* into my eager clutch. The ghosts delighted me particularly and I do admire to see how every slightest incident works in and becomes an important part of the pattern. Was it grasping of me that I wanted some one to see *Old* Jane's pretty young wraith—while she lay entranced—her poor young little spirit—freed from the body and its wrong. Her return to life is almost unbearably painful—as bad as the touch of Janey's rings—which I have not yet forgiven you for. Also in *Somehow Good* it was only the affection and confidence of a lifetime that enabled me to trust you during your shocking attempt to drown Sally. Once or twice even my faith faltered—and I had to sniff and gain courage to go on.

'But as yet I have only read that book once—so I am not competent to talk of it as I can of Joseph and Alice. Oh, the dedication to E. B.-J. and W. M.[1] warmed my heart—a living protest against the wickedness of thinking of them in the past tense.

'I am as *certain* of life's continuance as I am that I now live—but nothing really comforts the present pain of the parting here and now. Do you remember my automatic script? You and Evelyn are of the few I venture to talk to about it. It goes on fairly regularly, yet is dull when I read it over. But I send it—secretly—to the patient S. P. R. and they sometimes find things that seem to count. For instance—here in Calcutta on Oct. 17th, 1906, my hand wrote:—

'"Nor guessed what flowers would deck a grave" Downing. . . .

'"Do not let A. be seriously perturbed. This will be a slight attack and a very brief one. A. T. M."

'That doesn't sound evidential—but when one learns that on Oct. 17th—Dr. *A.* W. V. of Cambridge went to see the *Downing* Professor—who was ill—finding this particular attack had been slight and brief, and that *A. T. M.* are the initials of a dead doctor of medicine, friend of them both—it gives one a little to think—doesn't it? Also—on the death day of the poor Downing Professor two months later—there were two "coincidences" in my script. Of course, I am not told of anything evidential until long and long after. . . .

'P.S. I am very much indebted to you for the blessed assurance of the death of the Octopus. Life with such an one would have been far worse than ten drowning deaths for Sally.'

William De Morgan to Mrs. Holiday.

'*March* 1, 1908.

'DEAR KATE,—

'I am very anxious to see a letter I have been waiting for from you with a complete criticism of the last book. . . .

'There are more blunders in this book than in both the others put together. I find I wrote *All's well that ends well* for *Much ado about nothing*—*why* I can't say—can only conjecture.

'I don't think anything of having made Orion visible at the wrong time of year—besides he was coming very soon—and his name is too beautiful to leave out of a star-studded sky, on paper.

'I thought to have managed corrections for the second impression, but it jumped out too quick for me.

'I like the sound of your cottage—to me, it's always delightful in Westmorland, because I've never been there, and am only told of the excursions people have had there, over mountains.

'Florence is deliciously quiet, because the Trams have struck—not but what they spend their lives striking, like hysterical clocks, to make one clear out of the way. They've stopped *that* way, and done it the other. The place is delightful without them.

'Our loves to you all. May England be merry for you is our wish.'

Two days later arrived a warm appreciation of Sally from Mrs. Holiday: 'The writing, your manner has taken the world by storm,' she wrote, 'and the way it seems at once to have taken to you—the instant affection I notice in people's faces even when they refer to you—the way your admirers shake

[1] *Alice-for-Short* was dedicated to Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.

hands, is all so perfectly delightful and satisfactory—that in our old age it has been a most delightful experience.' And she adds: 'Among your ardent admirers I find only two small points of criticism made; one is that Lossie is only interesting because she is the woman Joseph Vance loves; and the other is that in *Alice-for-Short* you might have made Charlie and Alice more quickly come to an understanding; it was, however, quite natural they should not: they were such dears they feared taking advantage of each other!'

'I am so glad I can't tell you,' De Morgan replied, 'that Sally has given you all such satisfaction. She is now passing for me into the stage of being a little party I once knew and can talk about. Like the others! For when I say, for instance, that Charley and Alice were like the converse of two pugilists keeping away and dodging round and round a moveable point, I say it as about two independent characters that I, for one, had no share in the construction of. I shouldn't know how to set about altering them now! I myself never felt Lossie as interesting as Janey, but a good lot of folk I have talked to have simply taken it for granted that Lossie is the cynosure of the story. And in this case too I have washed my hands of the story personally, as it were, and can only speculate from what Joe says. *I* don't know!

'I think and hope that anyone reading any of my stories hereafter will say, "Evidently this chap had known much nicer women than Dickens or Thackeray." I suspect it is actually the fact. That is quite true about mothers and daughters—novelists seem to have cultivated a *parti pris* of detestableness, why?—in the name of Goodness——'

Nevertheless, De Morgan was himself accused of a form of 'detestableness,' which was alluded to by several correspondents in varying terms. Among these the following comments caused him some amusement:—

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'Somehow you have the knack of making one feel at home with your characters, especially the girls. Only it seems to me that your experience of old ladies must have been unfortunate, for nearly all your elderly ladies are exasperating. Your fathers are nice, and your sisters just perfect, but I wish you knew a real living unselfish old lady to be somebody's mother in your next story. I could introduce you to several.

'Joseph Vance was particularly interesting to me because for one thing most of the characters lived near Balham, where I lived 16 years; then he played chess, and so evidently you are a chess player. . . . And lastly you are evidently fond of music. Altogether you give me the impression of being a nice person to know and to have a game of chess with. But goodness knows where you live or whether you will ever trouble to answer a complete stranger? Never mind, it won't do you any harm to know that your books have given pleasure to some one—all but those old ladies.'

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'PHILADELPHIA,
'PENNSYLVANIA, U.S.A.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'Thank you for the golden hours you have given me with Joseph, Alice, and the dears in *Somehow Good*, including that old humbug the Octopus. I can't feel as if I were addressing a perfect stranger, because in reading your books I have lived in them, chuckling aloud and weeping (audibly) too.

'To help me to pass weary, wakey nights when folks should be asleep, I play the game of pretend—pretending to be some one whom I like . . . what a difference that does make! and last night I was you. Such a funny patch-work you! There was some of Dr. Thorpe, a little of Joseph, whole lots of Mr. Charley and little bits of Hugh, Rupert, Jerry—the rage of sticking envelopes, for instance—the Major and C. Dance in for good measure.

'I'm very sorry if I took liberties with you, but at any rate you owe me thanks for not putting into the "you" I was last night a single bit of that dish-watery little G.P. [General Practitioner] you palmed off on Sally!'

Sir Theodore Cook to William De Morgan.

'*March 11th*, 1908.

'I should like to thank you for your charming novels and to send you a motto for Sally (I gave up her correct surname), in *Somehow Good*.

'It is not very classical, but most appropriate.

'*Parvula, pumilio, χαριτων μια, tota merum sal.*

'Yours sincerely
'THEODORE A. COOK.'

Mrs. Drew to William De Morgan.

'HAWARDEN RECTORY,
'*May 22nd*, '08.

'I am going next Monday to Aix les Bains, and hardly know how to undertake a long journey without a Lossie or an Alice or a Sally.

'I was so glad to hear (when I was in London), from Mr. Masterman, that the late Prime Minister (Campbell-Bannerman) would gladly have put off dying another fortnight if by that means he could have ensured reading a 4th Novel of yours.

'Some one told me you had several typed—so after all, he might have had the 4th treat?

'I wished I had known before the funeral at the Abbey instead of immediately after it, as standing close to his coffin I should have had such a fellow feeling—it wd have made me such a real mourner—whereas I scarcely knew him.

'I suppose you haven't a novel in type or MS. for me to read on the journey? Please ask Mr. Heinemann to publish a new edition of the three in good print.'

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'"JOURNEY'S END,"
'OHIO, U.S.A.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'I have often wondered if you would be interested to know how much one American girl enjoys your books, and to hear of the queer places into which they have penetrated.

'Have you been to Grand Manan Island? One stormy day when the fog horn blew continuously I first met "Sally." Two years later I was sitting alone (and feeling very *much* alone) in a wee Japanese coach just leaving Kamakura. I suppose I did stare rather hard at the big Englishwoman and her tiny husband opposite, but they kept looking at me. As they left the train she turned back and said hesitatingly, "You remind us both of Sallykins—do you know her?" I nearly shouted, "Of course I do," from the open window in my eagerness to acknowledge our mutual friend.

'When I like anyone particularly I send him or her one of your books. There is one copy in Montana that has travelled from one end to the other of Dead Man's Canyon. Another that has been loaned, so its owner writes me, to every English reading resident in the small Indian village. You have so many admirers over here in this country of ours. Do please write lots of books.

'Sincerely yours,
'V. B. L.'

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'SAN FRANCISCO,
'1908.'

'DEAR SIR,—

'I want to thank you for a new world of pleasure and delight, which you gave me in *Somehow Good*.

'Last night I set the book down with deep regret. And I resolved then to do that unpardonable thing—write to the author.

'This because I know you are very human, and will be glad to hear from an unknown reader thousands of miles away.

'I ambled along over *Somehow Good*, just *poking* along delightfully. And it was one of the chiefest pleasures of the book that I could do so—instead of being histed-highsted out of my chair by a clang and bang of emotions. In short, I *lived* in that tale.

'There was a dear Mer-pussy, a Sallykin belonged to us once, tho' no such shadow of blinding sorrow as threatened *your* Sally ever happened in her history. But there were all sorts of similar names—even to a "Jeremiah," and all sorts of breathless capers. She learnt to swim, and many a joyful plunge she had at Boulogne. But the fate that I trembled over for *your* Sallykins—death in the sunlight of youth—took *our* Sallykins away. Tho' it was not the sea—what matter? She sleeps at St. Rocque in Paris now, and the rest of us miss her sorely.

'You have made tears of tenderness come to my eyes. *Somehow Good* will not be forgotten. How we shall be on the look-out for more De-Morganatic literature.

'A grateful reader,
'C. P.'

A Stranger to William De Morgan

'GLASGOW,
'*Aug. 24th*, 1911.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'I really wanted to say *Joseph Vance*—because you are Joseph Vance, aren't you? It struck me last night when I was lying awake listening to the wind trying to tear off our roof, and enjoying the society of Joseph and Lossie, and Sally and Old Prosy, as I often do—it struck me that it would only be a gracious thing to thank my host. I mean, I have enjoyed that society for so many months that I must thank some one. It is like suddenly being cured of some hideously painful disease and going off without saying thank you to the surgeon.

'I am not a girl—I was thirty-two last birthday and I have a jovial husband and three wee buddies of my own. But I have not lost my capability for dizzy joys and keen delights. I want to die before that goes from me. I think I want to go home in the middle of the party still. I used to have to go when I was young. It seemed a hardship then, but I know now that it was not. All this about myself: but I want you to understand. Nothing outside of me and my life, has given me the endless joy that I have found under the covers of *Joseph Vance* and *Somehow Good*—I can say *Alice-for-Short* too, because I am reading *Alice* now. In all my life, beyond the sun on the sea and the wind across the heather—nothing has given me more satisfying, lasting pleasure than your books.

'I cannot write what I mean. When I write it, it turns itself upside down and pretends to be something else. But Joseph Vance would understand, and you *are* Joseph, aren't you? Tell me, have you a dear Lossie all of your own? Have you known Sallies and Janies and Alice-for-Shorts? One cannot pick one's friends. I mean there are only the people around us, a limited circle; and the only other choice given us is to not make friends at all. I have friends: precious treasures belonging to glad days and sad days of my girlhood: but they are not beside me. I see them seldom and your books provide me with friends that come just exactly when I want them. No other books have quite done this before. Joseph and Sally never shirk problems that I put before them nor fade unsatisfactorily into nothing when I most need their help and their philosophy.

'For all the joy that has come to me and will come to me still from your hands, I wish to say "Thank you," dear Joseph Vance. If one day when the sun does not shine or some one has hurt you perhaps, or for some other reason, your thoughts are less glad than usual, it may make you happy to remember what I have tried to say in this letter. It would please me to think that I could give you any fraction of the pleasure you have given me.

'Very gratefully yours,
'M. W.'

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'EDINBURGH.

'DEAR AUTHOR OF *Somehow Good*,—If you only knew what delight you have given a little Minister's wife who has the cares of the Minister and dozens of children on her mind and body!

'I wish I could make you know what a beautiful rest you can give tired souls, tired sometimes almost to extinction and want of hope. Sally came as the greatest treat with her charming child-of-Natureness, her irrepressibility, and joy of life; and all her train. It was with a feeling of loss I closed her book. But I have a treat in store for me. *You* may well envy me for I have to make the acquaintance of *Joseph Vance* and *Alice-for-Short* yet! And somehow or other I must make them mine. The cares that beset the mother of dozens as to the dressing and finding the footgear wherewithal to present them faultless before the Congregation (of elders' wives, say), and finding the variety of wholesome food the soul of healthy children loveth (which latter almost persuades me to fill them with the husks the Simpler Food Society provides) makes the falling astray into the charmed realms of your beautiful works very, very delightful, if sinful! There—I've written a page and a half of nonsense which you may never bother finishing, but still from the heart of

'A lover (AND ADMIRER) OF,
'SALLY.'

One more letter requires a brief explanation.

Far away in a city in America a little man lay dying under melancholy circumstances. He had led, apparently, a most useful life; he had devoted his entire existence to the promotion of local charities and philanthropic organizations; he had written books to aid his humanitarian schemes; and now all this mental and physical activity was suddenly brought to a close, and the great Tragedy had come upon him in ironical guise. The extraction of an aching tooth by a dentist, for which cocaine had been employed, produced poisoning; paralysis ensued, and the end was a foregone conclusion.

Then as he lay waiting for the slow coming of Death, during the long hours of that invalid existence which contrasted cruelly with his former happy activity, he read *Joseph Vance*; and it seemed to him as though, groping in a great darkness, he had suddenly clasped the hand of a friend. So powerful an impression did the book make on him, that he subsequently kept it always by his bedside, and he became filled with an intense longing, before he passed to the great Beyond, to have one personal communication from the author, that friend many thousand miles away, who had soothed his mental and physical anguish. So his relations wrote privately to De Morgan, to beg the latter to gratify the whim of the invalid; and De Morgan who, however great his weariness after long days of ceaseless penmanship, never failed to respond to every correspondent, wrote with a great tenderness to the unknown man who was passing so sadly through the Valley of the Shadow.

By and by the answer came.

'1908.

'MY DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'Your friend died last evening. He had become blind and quite helpless, and I am sure that he was a very happy little man when he moved up somewhere else.

'He loved "Alice" and "Sally"; but "Joseph" remained his helper and companion.

'His nurse writes me that she read *Joseph Vance* through to him from cover to cover at least six times and "often he called for certain passages as Puritans called for verses from the Bible."

'Your letter he sent me to read and said "Please return it at once because I may die so soon, and I want to read it again before I go." I thank you for your goodness to him.'

Thus it was that while De Morgan's books sped to different parts of the globe, their readers wrote to him—not conventional words of fulsome praise such as many authors receive, but letters written from heart to heart—letters from lonely people who had found a friend, weary people who had found rest and refreshment, letters from old and young, clever and simple, from the sick, the maimed, the dying, all confident

of sympathy and of that tender comprehension which they had found in his published words—'that personality,' wrote one, 'which is all in all in the De Morgan novels.' By and by, De Morgan had a special receptacle made for this correspondence, for in its great mass, with the strange and often pathetic stories which it suggested, it formed a human document such as it has been the lot of few men—if any—to receive.

But occasionally among the letters dealing with his new profession, came some which seemed like a breath from a far-away past.

'Will it interest you [asks a correspondent from Georgeville at the close of a long letter] to know that I asked a very clever and delightful man in Cuba if he had ever read *Joseph Vance*, and he said, "Read it!—Why, I've read *Joseph Vance* nine times, and *Alice-for-Short* eight!"

'And now I have something more to thank you for, since a friend has sent me a bowl of the colour of old wine full of iridescent hues, a perfect delight to my eyes, and I hear that it was made under your guidance. You do not know how its colour glows in this little cottage way up in the mountains in Canada, nor what a pleasure and joy it is to all who see it.

'Altogether I couldn't help writing to you, could I? and I do thank you with all my heart.'

John Ward [1] *to William De Morgan.*

'THE MOUNT,
'FARNINGHAM, KENT.
'*5th April*, 1908.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'I am much interested with your Pamphlet on Pottery for Egyptian Clays, albeit that I am an ignoramus in such matters—and your scientific lore on practical potter's work was beyond my wits to grasp.

'Often have I gazed at Egyptian potters' work at Keneh and elsewhere, and admired their use of their fingers and toes, and wondered at the really pretty forms they produced as if by magic, rising out of a lump of clay into elegant shapes of a perfect symmetry.

'In Spain I once travelled with Henry Doulton of Lambeth, and James Anderson Rose (the latter was the man who made Doulton add a sort of Artistic refinement to the cult of making drain-pipes—in the manufacture of which humble but essential aids to civilization Doulton had made a large fortune).

'We came to a remote pottery, somewhere in Andalusia, and found a nice-looking ancient gentleman "throwing" vases and pots of excellent form, on a very primitive wheel. We got into conversation with the artist, and when Doulton complimented him on the speed of the horizontal wheel, and told him he had worked a similar wheel when he was a boy, the old gentleman said, "If you ever learned to throw a wheel properly you can never forget it—try again!" So dear old Doulton took off his coat, took his seat at the bench, and made pots equal to the native—much to his and our delight.

'He told us that his father, who had started the great Lambeth pottery in the early years of the last century, made him work at the trade for seven years, as a practical potter, and so he learnt so much, that he died a millionaire with a title.

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[1] John Ward, F.S.A., Author of *Pyramids and Progress*.

'I don't know if you ever met Doulton; he was an excellent fellow, and our companion to most cities in Europe on our Eastern trips of many years. We visited Florence, Venice, Bologna, Genoa, Turin, Milan, etc., etc., and I formed the taste for travel and art that led me afterwards to every city in Europe (almost) and afterwards to Egypt and Greece and Turkey.

'Now the work of the Potter in all ages is the means of determining the age and date of cities and settlements back to prehistoric days, and I read yesterday in a lecture in the *Times* by Professor Dunn, on Biblical Palestine, that nine strata of as many different cities, super-imposed one upon the other, had been explained and dated by the evidence of their pot-sherds.

'Your old trade was a wonderfully old art, and must have fascinated you, and then what glorious tiles you made!

'Your new trade is fascinating for you and for the public—1,000 for every one who appreciated the tiles. But I am glad that you produced the glorious tiles when you were young!

'Yours sincerely,
'JOHN WARD.'

'I don't believe,' De Morgan said once, when asked about the possible reproduction of a series of his former designs for pottery, 'that those tiles could be reproduced except the moment of the world when they were made could come back. So of all work where the thread is lost—with the added need often (as in this case) of bringing back a giant from extinction, if extinct, or from the job he's on, if any!'

Yet so late as 1914 he was still looking back on that vanished career with a haunting regret. 'I wonder,' he wrote to Mr. Marillier at that date, 'whether a centenarian twenty-eight years hence will squander his book-royalties on the erection of new kilns, with superannuated dodderers to pack and fire them? If I were personally in England I should do that very selfsame thing. I can't tell you how I miss never having a kiln to open next day!'

CHAPTER XIII

THE REAL JANEY

AS De Morgan gradually drifted into the new routine entailed by his change of profession, he systematically referred all that he wrote to his wife; and he often stated that he never began any story till she had given him the keynote in an opening sentence. Every Sunday he read aloud to her what he had written during the week; and when a book was entirely finished, he read it to her again from cover to cover to ascertain whether the narrative ran satisfactorily as a whole. With her fine intellect, her scholarly training, and her rich imagination, she was an excellent critic; and as she had been the mainspring of his inspiration, so hers remained the final verdict against which, in his view, there was no appeal. To her alone it was due that he did not actually destroy certain of his books through a mistaken impression of their futility; or eliminate much delightful by-play through a too-amiable desire to pander to the views of printers and librarians.

'But the worst is,' he complained to Sir William Richmond, 'she will fall asleep at the crucial passages, and then when she wakes up swear she hasn't missed anything at all, and that it all fits in perfectly!' 'He always,' added Sir William, 'referred to her as "She," and spoke of her with a mingled pride and reverence which was infinitely touching.' The mysterious dedication of *Somehow Good* 'To M.D.W. from W.D.M.' was his dedication 'To My Dear Wife.'

'The first thing which I look for in every review,' he admitted once, after the publication of *Joseph Vance*, 'is the evaluation—if any—of Lossie and Janey'; and although there exists no manner of resemblance, as portrayed by his pen, between the homely, placid Janey and the brilliant personality of his own wife, there is no doubt that the bonded sympathy, too delicate and too deep for any laboured insistence, which he makes one feel so powerfully existent between Joey and Janey was, in all its completeness, a personal experience.

There was, moreover, one little romantic incident consequent upon his sudden literary success which was especially charac-

THE SLEEPING EARTH AND WAKENING MOON

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

teristic of both himself and his wife. At the time of his engagement, owing to the state of his finances, he had, at Evelyn's especial request, never given her an engagement ring; and now that those finances had improved, the first thought that occurred to the lover and husband of twenty years was that she should have the belated gift. He therefore hunted about for a considerable time to find some stone which should fulfil his ideal of flawless beauty; and at length, in Italy, he found a fine sapphire set round with diamonds—a gem of rare translucent colour.

'I have at last found what I have been looking for!' he announced joyfully to the old Florentine from whom he purchased it, and the latter amused him by the mysterious rejoinder:—

'You are buying more than you know, Signor. This is no ordinary stone. It has magic in it as well as beauty, and if given as a token between those who love, it will never pass to another.'

'It sounds just as if I were a bit of a fairy-tale!' said De Morgan to his wife; but there were those who, having learnt the remark of the mystic Florentine, found cause to recall it later.

One result of De Morgan's success in his new profession, however, was to deepen a nascent aversion on Evelyn's part to exhibiting her work. Throughout her girlhood, as we have seen, and throughout the years when the expense of the factory had been a constant drain upon her resources, the sale of her pictures had been a necessity. Now came a breathing space in that arduous labour, so that she was able to cast her eyes on the world around and to see the change which had stolen over the spirit of Art. She visited the exhibitions of Cubist and Futurist painters, and gazed with frank bewilderment at the vagaries of those new exponents of Idealism. She heard the ignorant praising the impudent, the trickster triumphing where sincerity had failed; and her comment was reticent: 'I am reminded,' she said, 'of Hans Andersen's story of the Emperor's new clothes!' Meanwhile De Morgan, writing of this later development of what he had nicknamed the 'Boshite' of his youth, remarked:—

'Every one knows that unless he praises what other people think rubbish, they won't credit him with a higher form of knowledge than their own, and that's the sort of fame that bounce grows fat upon!'

One conclusion, however, Evelyn De Morgan arrived at: 'If that is what people like now,' she said briefly, 'I shall wait till the turn of the tide.' So she continued to paint with unabated energy, but when a picture was completed, she placed it against the wall, and seldom even troubled to have the glass

dusted. Each successive painting was thus set aside to be forgotten; and another promptly begun. Work and the necessity for self-expression sufficed.

During the years which followed, there flowed from her brush many lovely fantasies of which only a few can be referred to here.

Of those reproduced in this volume, 'The Garden of Opportunity' is a picture singularly rich in decorative effect and wealth of detail, so that it presents something of the appearance of a piece of old-world tapestry in which the colours have been miraculously preserved. In a fair landscape are seen two mediæval Italian students clad in beflowered garments of mauve and rose. They are turning away from Wisdom who, yellow-robed and full of a sorrowful grace, is standing beside a sculptured seat of ruddy porphyry; they are pursuing Folly —a lovely little figure who seems to have drifted down the Ages from the brush of Botticelli. So light and airy is her poise that she looks as though she would dance out of the picture; her robe is fashioned of pearly scales with a fluttering mantle of sapphire; and she is holding out to her dupes enticingly a silver ball of which the reverse side, hidden from their vision, is a skull. In the distance, tinted pink and ochre in the sunset, are buildings—water-mills and a Fairy Castle over which the moon is rising; while round the corner of the roadway is peeping a little devil who lends a note of humour to the situation, in that he is conspicuous for what the painter used to term his 'De Morgan forehead,' as well as for the impish glee with which he is watching the on-coming of the errant youths.

Of a different type is the picture of 'Helen of Troy.' A single figure of radiant beauty, she is toying with her golden hair and gazing, enthralled by her own loveliness, in the mirror of Venus. Her robe is bright pink, while at her feet blossom white roses, and about her circle snow-white doves, dazzling in their purity against the background of sunlit landscape and azure sea. In the distance the fated towers of Ilium show, clear-cut against a translucent sky. A companion picture of 'Cassandra' represents the prophetess, clad in blue with blood-red roses at her feet, her wild, mad beauty outlined against a background of Troy in flames.

In 'The Valley of Shadows' the Riddle of Life is depicted. A King, in a robe of gold, is standing in front of his crumbling Palace, while his foot still rests upon the neck of a lovely slave. Fame is wandering blind-fold down the Valley, dropping her favours erratically as she moves. Opposite, into the blue and yawning Caverns of Death, a victim, in the pride of his manhood, is about to take the fatal plunge. In the centre, in draperies

THE GARDEN OF OPPORTUNITY
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

of crimson and white, a nun-like figure is raising impassioned hands to the deaf heavens where, dim and intangible, there floats the vision of an angelic form.

The large picture of 'Saint Christina giving away her Father's Jewels to the Poor' (12 ft. by 7½ ft.) is an ambitious conception, the grouping and the composition of which is very striking. The pale, ethereal saint, clad in white with a cincture of red, is standing on the steps of her pagan father's Venetian Palace. In accordance with the legend respecting her, she is distributing to the poor jewels from the idols she has broken. Angels in a long procession and in lovely draperies are descending the wide stairway behind her to aid her in despoiling the treasures of the Palace. In the foreground the picturesque Italian beggars are thronging in their boats to the marble steps—the blind, the avaricious, the wretched—beautiful despite their misery, their drapery falling into graceful folds, greed or tragedy expressed in their fine and eager faces; while one almost seems to hear the splash of their boats passing through the blue waters and the ripples ceaselessly lapping the cool, pale marble.

'Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund,' a comparatively small canvas, is arresting alike for its delicate imagination and dexterous handling. The mediæval atmosphere is again indicated in the decorative effect of the interior depicted. The ancient yew hedge of the mysterious labyrinth is seen through the open doorway; an oaken seat, finely carved, is conspicuous in the foreground; a deeply recessed window of glowing glass shows above the frightened face of Fair Rosamund. And the two women who figure in this setting, Eleanor and her victim, are both clad in robes so exquisite in hue that these seem to shimmer into different shades while one strives to define the dominant colour in each; moreover the draperies of both are sown with pearls, each tiny pattern representing a different study in perspective. But a sinister note is struck by the evil emanations which exhale from Eleanor; shadowy, snaky forms and ape-like faces, transparent but foul, enter with her; and before their horrid presence the pitiful little Loves who had hovered about Rosamund, weeping and terrified, flutter away amid the drifting roses of a fragrant Past.

Other pictures cling to the remembrance of those who have seen them: The lovely 'Daughters of the Mist' who linger near a mountain chasm while the first rays of sunrise dye their filmy robes to a tender rose; 'The Sleeping Earth and Wakening Moon,' the latter enshrined in a transparent globe while her shining locks trail away into golden cloud; Boreas, a weird Blake-like figure fiercely dispersing the naked, fallen leaves; or 'The Worship of Mammon' which recalls the imagery of G. F. Watts, and which, like 'The Daughters of the Mist,' presents a remark-

able study in drapery. Against a background of star-studded sky, deep with the sombre blue of a Southern night, two figures show in bold relief. One is a woman in whose keen face hunger, covetousness and despair are expressed, as she clings in frantic supplication to the knees of a giant Form which towers above her. And Mammon sits there enthroned, a figure of brass, whose face and shape, half-revealed, accentuate the mystery which enshrouds him: a Presence suggestive of relentless force, of limitless power, of implacable cruelty, and of torturing provocation as he holds at arm's length the well-filled money-bag, for ever out of the reach of the unhappy wretch who craves it. Wholly different in atmosphere, though poignant in pathos, is 'The Poor Man who Saved the City.' A lonely, attractive figure with a wise, sad face, he is seated among the brambles by the city wall, where he meditates in solitude, while the people he has saved and the great ones of the land go, with banner and trumpet and public rejoicing, to celebrate all that has been brought to pass by the wisdom of the man they have so quickly forgotten. . . .

Others there are, too numerous to mention, which cannot be represented here even in the reproductions which, robbed of their glowing colours, fail to convey their atmosphere and their charm. Virile and strong, delicate and subtle, infinite in variety, in poetry, in inspiration, Evelyn's work never flagged throughout the passing years; but while she withdrew more and more from the world, living in that dream-world of her own creation and in her selfless devotion to that other life which ran side by side with her own, her husband, as success came to him, facetiously remarked the *volte-face* in their respective positions: 'Formerly it used to be Mrs. De Morgan and her husband, now it is Mr. De Morgan and his wife!' Of all which he owed to her, however, he was profoundly aware; and once when some one was talking in enthusiastic terms of his genius, he cut short the panegyric gently by pointing to the 'real Janey':—

'*There* is the genius,' he said.

THE POOR MAN WHO SAVED THE CITY

EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT

" There was a little City, and a few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the City; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

"Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised."—*Ecclesiastes.*

CHAPTER XIV

'BLIND JIM' AND 'LUCINDA'

1907–1909

THROUGHOUT this period, the perpetual contrast between his present celebrity and his previous failure gave De Morgan a happy, harmless gratification. 'I am glad you like my books,' he wrote to one correspondent. 'I am puzzled at my relation to them! and very much surprised at their success. It's a funny story altogether!' He was like a child with a new toy; the novelty of his experience delighted and amused him, while leaving the inherent simplicity of his character untouched. The mere fact of being lionized—the letters which continued to pour in from all parts of the world; the adulation of his especial public; the eulogies of the Press; even the social functions to which he was incessantly bidden, were to him all part of a splendid adventure which had overtaken him unawares: 'the last of Life for which the first was made.' 'His literary career was the happiest time of his life,' his wife wrote later. 'It was roses, roses all the way.' And when, on rare occasions, the experience was momentarily reversed and a jarring note warred with his contentment, he accepted this with the same air of deep, but detached, interest which he might have devoted to some impersonal phenomenon. . . . 'His frank amusement over adverse reviews,' remarked an interviewer with appreciation, 'might be a trifle disconcerting to those who have sometimes attacked him with a rancour very clearly born of jealousy. . . . He avows openly that he writes to please himself, and listens with an amused smile to any protest against his being as "historical," or as prolix and discursive as he chooses!'

Nevertheless it was a constant source of surprised satisfaction to him that the pecuniary anxiety of his artistic career was now at an end, and that a steady flow of money continued to pour in from the royalties on his books. 'I feel like Crœsus!' he said with a suggestion of bewilderment. Yet when some friend asked him what was the nature of his contract with Heinemann he responded contentedly, 'I never really worry about contracts. When I want some money, I just write to Heine-

mann for £1,000 and he sends me a cheque, and when that is gone, I write for another. It's much simpler!' Though this must not be taken too literally, all his correspondence on monetary matters connected with his literary work is distinctly naïve.

'You mentioned' [he writes to Heinemann in one letter] 'that I might apply to you for an advance, but we didn't name any amount, and I feel a little puzzled when I try to make up my mind how much to ask for. Would you solve the problem for me by sending me whatever sum you think the circumstances warrant, at any such time as you may find to be convenient to you?'

On another occasion when Heinemann had offered him some payment, we find him refusing cheerfully: 'Thanks be to Gracious Goodness, I am not in any need of money!' Indeed, he never was able to divest himself of a conscientious feeling that he was taking an undue advantage of his publisher: 'I seem to myself a lazy, undeserving chap who sits in a warm room and writes twaddle, and then gets a lot of money for it!' Again he remarks with mild astonishment, 'Fancy Statement-time having come round once more! I wonder who buys these books—I suppose the world *is* an uncommon big one!' His unwonted wealth provided him with a fruitful subject of jest. Going by the Underground one day, he flung down twopence with a lordly flourish and observed with *hauteur*, 'I've grown *so* rich that I just *slap* down the coppers without a thought!'

Of stories, however, illustrative of his irresponsibility in finance, his friends had endless store. On one occasion, after being urged to consult a stockbroker respecting some depreciating security, he replied sapiently, 'I don't believe in those chaps—stockbrokers. They are dangerous. My idea is—if you have money in an investment, *keep it there*. To alter an investment seems to me something like tampering with the Constitution of the British Empire.' This attitude was emulated by his wife. 'I have never,' she once remarked cheerfully, 'looked at my pass-book since I married—I was so afraid of finding there was nothing there!' She, however, was admittedly more practical than he was; indeed, it was only through her disinterested conduct in the past that she had ever known the stress of any financial crisis.

But while De Morgan's third novel was outselling the previous ones, and while he was, as he described, 'close at it, scribbling, scribbling interminably,' there came a day which marked the close of an epoch in his life and that of his wife.

On August 2, 1908, Spencer-Stanhope finished a picture on which he had been working for some time, with the remark that now he intended to have a long rest. That night he slept peacefully, and when morning dawned they found that he had

entered upon a rest which could not be broken. 'How glad I should be,' wrote De Morgan, 'to go across to the other side in the same way—write (as it is *writing* now) up to the last hour or day, and then get away as happily from this painful flesh—and leave as good a memory behind as may be, though few of us may succeed in leaving as good a one as his—and so many to treasure it.'

This loss meant that Florence—now the home of so many years—could never be the same again to De Morgan and his wife, even though, for a time, Mrs. Stanhope continued to live on at the Villa which her husband had beautified, and a semblance of the old life continued. Moreover, during the spring of 1909, as De Morgan was wearily trying to complete a book which he referred to as 'a terrifying MS.,' a serious interruption to his work occurred in a succession of earthquakes, which further served to lessen his attachment to his Florentine home.

Evelyn De Morgan to Mrs. William Morris.

'*Jan. 17th*, 1909.

'How kind of you to write! Yes, we are both all right, but nervous after our earthquake, it was a sharp shock, and coming on the top of the Messina horrors produced a considerable panic.

'We were both asleep, but the noise woke me, then came the shaking and swaying of the room, and we both sprang up and dressed in less than five minutes. We were at the top of a very high house, so we had the full benefit of the shaking. We and some Russian friends spent the night partly out of doors and partly sitting in my studio (which is on the ground floor), with all the doors open, fearing another shock that might bring the house down. Some people slept through it, but a great many turned out and spent the night in the streets. No harm was done, but at Bologna the Palazzo Publico was injured, and a lady died of fright. It has not done my nerves any good, and we tremble if a door bangs. The weather is lovely, but the gloom of Messina hangs over everything, and one can think of nothing else.'

'My work,' De Morgan wrote to Heinemann, 'has flagged terribly in the last fortnight. You have no idea what a strain on the nerves this sort of thing becomes when one lives on the 4th floor of a house that, a few years since, had to be tied up after an earthquake! And there have been slight shocks again recently. . . . I am very ambiguous about everything in consequence! After the solid earth has once jumped under one's feet, all faith in being undisturbed three seconds hence goes, and you can as little go on writing as though you had just seen the postman on the doorstep and expected him to knock!'

So early as January 18, 1908, De Morgan had written to Heinemann:—

'As to what I am at work on, I am going on with a story which is not so good a story as Sally. It has no plot; and I have not at present the remotest idea how it will turn out. Then I have only got to 64,000 words

—rather like Little Billee when he'd only got to the 12th Commandment—but unlike him I can't cry out, "Laud, I see!"—for I don't.'

Later he wrote despondently of this new book, which he proposed to call 'Blind Jim.'

'I'm not in love with it myself. I have written at this moment my 237,000th word. About 31,000 of this since I arrived here, but I have only had about 30 working days—so much interruption at first. I'm going very slowly, even when at work. My impression is that in practice I go at the rate of 1,000 words per diem.

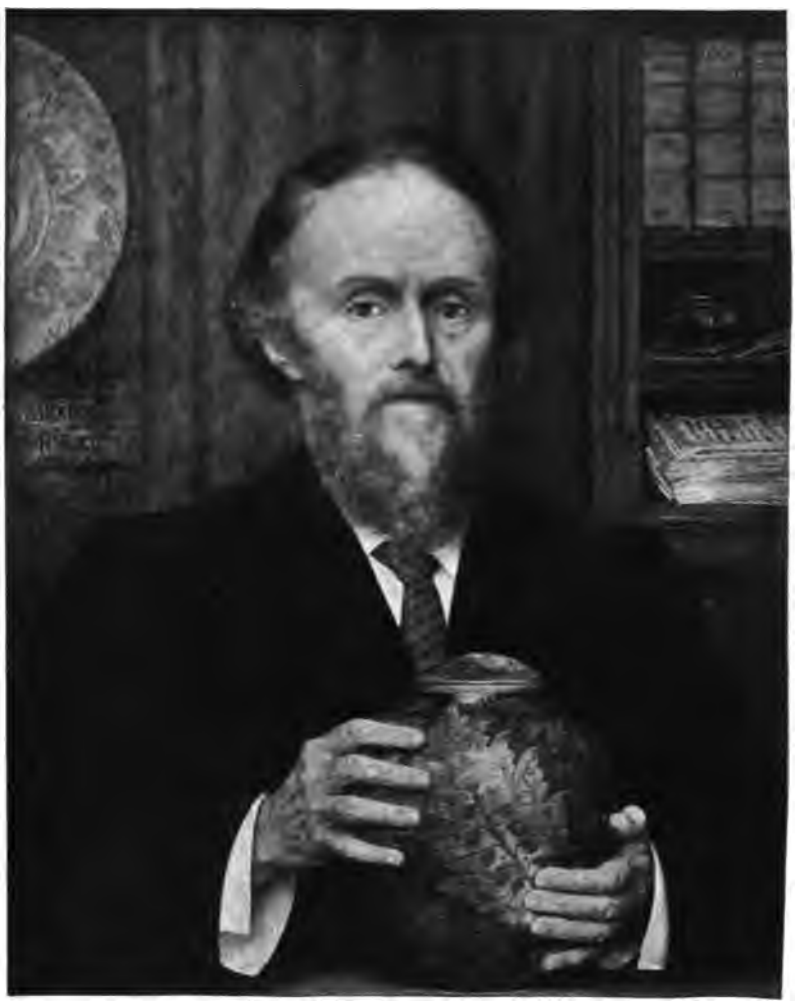
'However, I hope this and the revision of the whole will run concurrently with a big final delay, viz.: the needful time for reading it aloud to Mrs. De M. She, you see, is a very strong character, and when she wakes up, makes me read all through again from her last recollection. But this final read-through is a *sine qua non*; and if deferred till the proofs, it would be letting a most valuable discrepancy-detective loose on the work just a few hours too late, so to speak. Also this reading the whole aloud is my own final revision . . . for when it comes to plausible print, I overlook things.

'I have got interested in the wind-up—and She also—emphatically, which is satisfactory; so I am a good deal reconciled to it—*think* much better of it than I did. . . . Thanks for the agreement. I won't sign it yet. "Blind Jim's" life is sufficiently precarious without having a signed agreement to kill him!'

'Unfortunately,' wrote De Morgan to a friend, 'Heinemann says this interminable MS. cannot be hung over till the autumn because then comes his Hall Caine—who follows the tradition of his ancestor and kills his brothers.' Meanwhile the title underwent many variations. He had substituted 'Sunless Jim' for the name first chosen; afterwards he called it 'The Rocket Stick'; finally he decided to issue it under the attractive name of *It Never Can Happen Again*. Further, at his special request, Heinemann consented to brave the boycott of the libraries and risk its publication in two volumes in order to ensure better print; indeed, the whole was thus recast by him after it had already been printed in one.

According to Heinemann's intention, both volumes were to have as a frontispiece a picture of the author; the first, a portrait of him painted by his wife in 1893, and the second, a more mature portrait which she was completing at this date.

In the latter picture, De Morgan is depicted surrounded by tokens of his two professions. His hands are clasping a lovely iridescent pot, one of the last he made; on the wall behind him shows a beautiful plate of his own designing; and along adjacent shelves stand the three books he had already published, while the unbound MS. of *It Never Can Happen Again* lies conspicuously upon the table placed beside an inkpot and pen. The face in the picture was a faithful likeness, save only that the look of bright animation and humour which was habitual



PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM DE MORGAN BY EVELYN DE MORGAN
Painted 1909
Bequeathed by Evelyn De Morgan to the National Portrait Gallery.

to him was replaced by a most pitiful expression of weariness; for his wife, with the uncompromising accuracy for which her portraiture was remarkable, had caught the mood of the moment and—much to his subsequent amusement—reproduced unerringly the profound boredom which he was experiencing while having to sit to her!

But in spite of Heinemann's representations, both the victim and his tormentor raised characteristic objections to the publication of this picture.

William De Morgan to William Heinemann.

'The portraits are not my property, but my wife's. My personal identity (as far as I retain the copyright) is at the disposal of any arrangement you and she are agreed about. I shall say nothing to bias her, one way or t'other—but to you I feel bound to remark that two portraits in one work savours a little of egotism, and will make a poor bloke (when he's me) feel ridiculous.'

Mrs. De Morgan to William Heinemann.

'Both my husband and myself agree that what with the volumes in the background, and the pot in the foreground, to say nothing of inkpots, etc., it is far too bumptious a thing to be tolerated and too self-advertising to be allowed outside the family circle; so the idea must be given up.'

'I should,' wrote De Morgan later, 'like to see an Author's edition announced "without portrait" and uncut—an edition for Early Victorian paper-knife people like himself!'

Meanwhile De Morgan had heard from Professor Lyon Phelps that, in 1909, the Yale University Prize for excellence in original composition was to be awarded for the best Essay on the works of William De Morgan.

William De Morgan to Professor Lyon Phelps.

'VIA LUNGO IL MUGNONE,
'FLORENCE.

'It took me some minutes after receipt of your kind letter and enclosure to grasp the full extent of the compliment you have paid me—it has taken me a night's sleep on it (I got it yesterday) to consider how I can express my sense of it. Well!—I've given it up as a bad job. I can't!

'For really the selection of his work as a subject worthy of real thought and reflection is as high a compliment as can be paid to a recent writer, whose reputation has scarcely had time to acquire equilibrium. And from no source could it be more flattering to its recipient.

'Will you add to my indebtedness? When the prize is awarded, which I suppose will not be before the summer, it would be an immense pleasure to me to read the essay—you print, of course? May I look forward hopefully to the perusal?

'It has been a great interest to me to go carefully through the "List for General Reading." What a lot I haven't read!—e.g. it reminds me that for thirty-odd years I have been going to read Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*—and have never done it!

'I *must* read *Bob, Son of Battle*—quite unheard of by me till now. I see in the list of novels I have a century to myself, so far!'

Professor Lyon Phelps to William De Morgan.

'*16th Jan.*, 1909.

'Of course I shall send you the printed Essay. . . .

'The more I think over your books, the bigger they get in my mind. Old Vance's death-bed joy on hearing that his son was the one who hit the sweep, and the allusion to the Waldstein Sonata, and—hundreds of other things are simply unforgettable. The first chapter of *Somehow Good* is a permanent contribution to Literature.'

De Morgan's return to England in May, 1909, involved certain melancholy conditions. At the time when his Florentine home seemed changed in essence, the home in London where he and his wife had lived for twenty-two years was coming to an end. The sword of Damocles, in the person of the modern jerry-builder, had long hung over the Vale, and soon that picturesque little spot was to be a wilderness of bricks and mortar representing every phase of destruction and reconstruction. During their absence in Italy, indeed, it had suffered from neglect. A great weed, like some tropical plant, and other unchecked vegetation running riot, had transformed it into something resembling the Tale of the Briar Rose; and De Morgan, in *The Old Man's Youth*, represents his hero, Eustace John, thus paying a final visit to his old home:—

'The last time I saw the place . . . though it remained then an oasis in the desert of bricks and mortar that grew and grew throughout the whole of our occupancy, the signs of its approaching doom were upon it. The entrance gateway swung helpless on one hinge, and it seemed no one's business to repair it. The lane was defiled with filth and discarded journalism, and the trees were dead or dying. The gardens remained, but a weed unfamiliar to me, that I never knew the right name of, overran them, and the standard rose-trees were things of the past. . . .'

Nevertheless De Morgan, in conjunction with his two neighbours in the doomed locality, Mr. Stirling-Lee, the sculptor, and Professor Oliver, decided to give what he termed a 'house-cooling' in contradistinction to the usual 'house-warming' of an in-coming. He therefore consulted his brother-in-law, Mr. Stirling, about a suitable motto wherewith to embellish the invitation cards, and the latter suggested: '*Ave atque Vale.*' A few days later De Morgan wrote triumphantly: 'Evelyn came into my room yesterday saying, as I thought, "I've got such a capital motto: *Mox* moturi te salutamus. Vale!" It was a lucky mis-hearing to my thought, as "Mox moturi" runs "morituri" closer than "*nos* moturi." It will do beautifully.' So the invitations were dispatched with the two mottoes, and the recipients understood the ominous words, 'We about to move, salute you!'

'We spend the time putting directions on envelopes,' wrote De Morgan busily; 'I have been all the way through the Red Book except W X Y Z, and am panting to come to the last

man!' Meanwhile the conditions looked hopeless for an entertainment designed to be partly *al fresco*, for it was a niggardly summer of continuous and torrential rain; yet when the important date arrived a day of unclouded sunshine faded into a night of balmy breezes and glimmering stars.

And as darkness fell, the Vale, like a victim adorned for the sacrifice, took on a new beauty. All carriages were stopped at the prosaic King's Road, and the guests wandered a-foot into an unexpected Fairyland. Old Chelsea Pensioners in their scarlet coats guarded the lane, which was festooned with glowing lanterns; and at its end the three householders received in the centre of the roadway under trees gemmed with fairy lamps. There, all around, brickwork and foliage were alike sparkling with points of flame. Wherever the eye turned, the illumination was repeated with artistic effect, the colours blending softly, the lines of twinkling fire swaying in the breeze, and creating, down spangled vistas, an impression of limitless space. The three houses and their respective gardens were open to the guests of all, and each offered a different form of entertainment, both within and without doors. In one, a band played softly while nymphs drifted a-tune over the turf in picturesque dances; in another, a more strenuous concert was performed; while in the De Morgans' garden choral singing, heard through the open doorway of the studio, was interspersed by the song of a living dryad among the bushes, hard by where the head of Pan, in pottery, looked out wickedly from a grove of grass-green lamps. As the hours of the lovely night went by, the guests wandered and lost themselves in the flower-scented dimness, while pretty dresses shimmered to changing hues in the varying lights, and merry voices punctuated the dreamy music. Then, by and by, there was supper and song in the old deer park, beneath the doomed trees which, wreathed with fairy-lights, rocked gently—continuously—in a whispering breeze.

'There was music, and good talk and laughter,' related the Press, 'and in Mrs. De Morgan's beautiful, half-lit studio, her exquisite saints and angels, set in lilies and scarlet blossoms, looked down upon us with their serene sweetness, calling us back to Italy with insistence, while we listened to a chorus of sweet Italian voices. . . . Every detail of the brilliant scene had its especial value, and comes back with startling clearness. . . . We were all the gayer, seemingly, because this was the end.'

'I passed the evening,' De Morgan wrote to Heinemann, 'in such a hopeless bewilderment in a huge throng, that we might very easily have both been in it unknown to each other. It was like Cremorne! It Never Can Happen Again because we go out at Michaelmas.'

Unfortunately, before that date, an accident which befell Evelyn caused a severe injury to her right arm which, for a time, threatened to disable it permanently. Confronted by the horror of a crippled existence during which she might never be able to paint again, and for the present unable to travel, she and her husband remained perforce at the Vale under conditions which were peculiarly melancholy, for the work of demolition was in active progress and the sound of pickaxes rang in their ears all day. 'This with our move impending!' wrote De Morgan tragically. 'I had to give up my voyage, and we are here still by grace of our landlords. All the place is pulled down about us, and we are isolated in a wilderness of brick rubbish.' In consequence, a legend obtained credence that De Morgan had refused to leave his old home even when the walls were falling about him.

Under such conditions of anxiety and discomfort he greeted the publication, on his 70th birthday, of *It Never Can Happen Again*, dedicated to the memory of Ralph, Earl of Lovelace, 'in remembrance of two long concurrent lives and an uninterrupted friendship.' The date of the public appearance of this book fulfilled a prediction he had made, in consequence of a critic having misstated his age, that if he lived to be seventy he would in the interval write four or five volumes as long as his first. Simultaneously with its appearance, the following verse was sent to him from America:—

'A Novel Rhyme

(With apologies to William De Morgan).

'*Joseph Vance* kissed *Alice-for-Short*
As the two in the library stood:
It Never Can Happen Again, she cried.
He sighed: It was *Somehow Good*!'

De Morgan was extremely anxious to ascertain the result of publishing his book in two volumes in defiance of the fiat of the libraries. 'If any discussion arises from it which enables me to say my say audibly on the subject of the arbitrary limitation of the length of books, I shall consider that the sacrifice has not been in vain,' he said; for he remained convinced that the tendency of such action was to make the literature of the future superficial by forcing it inevitably into a groove, so that all writers, whatever the nature of their ability, would perforce aim at being impressionist rather than profound, at achieving a brilliant *tour de force* rather than any faithful picture of life. 'For all the cleverality of such novels,' he conceded, —'and no word suits them better than the one Charlotte Brontë coined —their characters are apt to be vivacious passing acquaintances, not lifelong friends.'

De Morgan's study

Entrance to Drawing-room

Entrance to Studio, which is not shown in the photograph

THE VALE, CHELSEA

Where William De Morgan lived till 1910, when it was pulled down. It is the original of "The Retreat" in "The Old Man's Youth."

But his conclusion in regard to the experiment was disappointing. 'It is the old cry for cheapness,' he discovered, 'comfort and luxury—even the quality of the contents do not weigh in the balance,' and to his cousin Miss Seeley he wrote:—

'The book is boycotted by four of the largest libraries, ostensibly for being too dear, and in two volumes. I don't think it matters, because it is all the same to me whether 100 people read circulating library volumes or 10 buy copies for themselves. As for the other 90, if they like having their books *Index Expurgatoriussed* by these chaps, they must please themselves—*I* should transfer my subscription to less Papal libraries.

'Heinemann has offered to supply the book to them in one volume, if that's the difficulty. As to the price, if they can't buy books at 3*d.* for 11,000 words, with commas and semi-colons, and all well spelled, they may e'en go without!'

'None the less,' he wrote later, 'I think the action of the libraries has brought about so many private purchases that we (publisher and self) really stand to gain by it!'

Not perhaps so generally popular as his earlier books, this fourth novel is nevertheless one of his finest studies of character. The plot hinges on the passing in August, 1907, of the Bill for legalizing marriage with the Deceased Wife's Sister. It describes how Challis, a successful author, husband of an aggressively suburban wife, dwelling amid aggressively suburban surroundings, by reason of his literary celebrity finds himself transported into a social *milieu* superior to that to which he has been accustomed. He goes to stay at Royd, a typical country house, and there encounters handsome Judith Arkroyd, 'a Grosvenor Square young lady,' as his wife defines her, who is illustrative of a certain type of society woman: hard, self-absorbed and unscrupulous, yet pre-eminently fascinating. An adept at flirtation, she exercises her charm upon the lion of the hour as a pastime, and ends by finding that what heart she is possessed of has become more seriously involved. The situation turns on the fact that Marianne, the author's wife, is the half-sister of his first wife, and therefore it appears possible for Judith to become legally united to the man with whom she is infatuated if the marriage can be rushed through before the passing of the Bill which would rivet his union with Marianne.

One of the most graphic scenes in the book is when Challis, unconsciously drifting under the spell of Judith's witchery, returns home, full of self-deception and good resolutions, to the stupid little wife whom he conscientiously thinks he loves, and who awaits him with a dawning suspicion of the dangerous fascination of her rival. The atmosphere of the life which he has left compared with that to which he comes back is cleverly suggested—never insisted upon. The long, wearisome drive

from Euston in an evil-smelling cab with a jaded horse; the arrival at a house palpably redolent of mutton and cabbage cooking for the delayed dinner; the inevitable row with the extortionate cabman and the obnoxious 'runner'; the matter-of-fact, somewhat acrid greeting of Marianne, the woman whom he is morally bound to love—all contrast with that different world which he has left, above all with the haunting glamour of that incipient romance—the existence of which he still mentally denies.

'When any lady or gentleman comes back from an absence in a cab with luggage on it—however passionate may have been her or his longing for a corresponding him or her who may have been (or might have been) watching at the door for its arrival, or however much the two of them may feel disposed to—

'"Stand tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter
Than anything on earth——"

they usually find, in practice, that it is necessary to stand matters over because of the cab. This does not, of course, apply to where a man-servant is kept, who can pay fares dogmatically, and conduct himself like the Pope in Council. But where the yearnings of both parties have to be suppressed all through a discussion of the fare and a repulse of the unemployed, whose services have been anticipated by your own mercenaries . . . well! do what you will in the way of cordiality afterwards, it *is* chilling, and you can't deny it. We know we are putting this in a very homely way, but this is a very homely subject.'

And later, when for Challis the time of self-deception has passed, and Judith has maddened him into a betrayal of the secret he had guarded even from his own consciousness, still more realistic is the description of that other return to the silent house which his wife has left; of the solitary hours that followed, punctuated by the voices of quarrelling servants indoors and drizzling rain without, and rendered more intolerable by the recollection of that wonderful episode in the garden at Royd the evening before—of proud Judith with her passion-lit eyes, her beauty intensified in the mystery of the moonlight, her dress of sequins, flashing, paling, with a thousand opalescent tints while it swathed her about, like the scales of a snake, lithe and sinuous. . . . And as the tortured man recalled that reprehensible incident, there floated about him again the stillness, the moonlight, the intoxicating scent of the roses, the murmuring speech of the woman who had wrung from him a confession he deplored. . . . Life is full of such contrasts—of such resolutions as those framed by Challis—which leave a man as putty in the moulding of Fate.

In a book of this description, teeming with a variety of characters and incident, it is difficult to instance one episode or one person as being more especially worthy of quotation. 'You want your De Morgan whole, or you want none of him,' aptly pointed out a reviewer. Nevertheless, among the finest pieces

of characterization is undoubtedly that of the athletic Rector, Athelstan Taylor, a magnificent specimen of his profession, whom one meets alike at Royd and in the slums and hospitals, coping heroically with unmentionable horrors. He serves to refute the heretical opinions of Challis on matters theological, thus presenting different aspects of certain many-sided problems which are further, if more satirically, exploited by the metaphysics of the great German philosopher, Graubosch, and his interpreters. De Morgan introduced the character of the clergyman into his book partly at the representation of certain readers, and partly out of gratitude for the warm appreciation expressed for his novels by so many ecclesiastical critics. 'Even Canons and Bishops seem to love me in spite of my heresies!' he said once, and ascribed this to what he termed his 'immortalism.' As to the philosophy of Graubosch (to the initiated *Grand-bosh*), '*The Standard*,' he wrote to Miss Seeley gleefully, 'says that Graubosch is the silliest thing ever written. It must be very silly!'

But the outstanding feature of *It Never Can Happen Again* remains the faithfulness with which three grades of Society are depicted—the clique to which Judith belongs with its own peculiar limitations of outlook and tradition; the suburban life of which the exponents are the petty-minded Marianne and her friend the mischief-making Mrs. Eldridge; and lastly the slum-life wherein the reader makes many valued friends besides the impressive Mrs. Steptoe—'Aunt Stingy'—and her poor, pathetic brother Jim Coupland, the blind ex-sailor with his little 'py-lot' Lizerann—Lizerann of whom none can surely read without a catch in the voice, being as she is one of the most human, pitiful, and tragic little figures in all fiction.

And throughout the story, divergent as are the courses of these various lives, their destinies overlap and are interdependent, so that no episode in their several histories is extraneous or irrelevant to the whole; and the final *dénouement*, when it comes, is as ingenious as it is unexpected.

Anent this book, De Morgan wrote to Professor Phelps:—

'Of course *I* like Lizerann and Jim better than the others. But they, the others, are like the man in Uncle Remus's story who might have been ole one-eyed Riley—there they were in the story and I had to see what could be done with them.

'I hope you will live to read many novels I shall never live to write. Now, isn't that an illustration of how intelligible the technically inaccurate may be?'

'At the time, when my parents and I were reading aloud *It Never Can Happen Again*,' relates Miss Holiday, 'some remark was made in De Morgan's presence about the repellent character of Mrs. Eldridge. "I flatter myself," he replied, "that

Mrs. Eldridge is the most odious character in all fiction." "But did you ever meet her in real life?" I asked. "No—o, at least, she's a mixture of two or three women—in *that* sense I have met her!"

'Judith is an awful minx!' complained another friend to him.

'Well, you see—she *was* a minx—*I* couldn't help it!' he replied regretfully.

'The only thing,' suggested a hypercritical reader, 'which struck me as far-fetched in the book, was the chauffeur driving over poor blind Jim twice and never even stopping!'

'That is the only thing in the book which is really true!' said De Morgan.

Yet he lamented a lack of realism in one episode. 'On the first page of Vol. II Marianne is biting a pencil. There is not a particle of evidence that she had taken a penstick out of her mouth that was there at the beginning of the same page. *She never had both in her mouth at once!* No, no!—it's a clear case for apology and correction. See next impression, please!'

'This book,' writes a settler to De Morgan from a lonely ranch, 'is to my taste, the better *novel*, but Joe Vance is the better circle of friends. My chum from California (honest we don't say *pal* and *pard* except in Bret Harte) is re-reading it for the fifth time, and says all the Californians are doing ditto!'

'Don't I just long,' writes a lady from Philadelphia, 'to learn whole chunks of the juicy bits by heart!'

'I do truly love your books. And You,' announces another at the beginning of a very long letter. 'That is really all I want to say, I suppose, and it is said. And seeing that if you knew who I am you certainly wouldn't care tuppence whether I loved you and your books or not, why say more?'

But the most apt appreciation, one which at least pleased him by its brevity, was as follows:—

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'*June 20th*, 1909.

'DEAR SIR,—

'There is only one thing to be said about *It Never Can Happen Again*—I wish it might!

'Yours faithfully,
'C. G.'

At the close of the book De Morgan had invited his readers to criticize anything in his work requiring revision, which he promised should, if practicable, be remedied in a later edition. The result was that he received many interesting letters, some of which contained suggestions upon which he acted. Amongst these was a communication from New Zealand pointing out that,

'There is one incident in the book which Never Has Happened Before, namely that of the polar bear in the South Atlantic—polar bears being as scarce south of the line as albatrosses are north of it.' So De Morgan removed his bear to more suitable regions, with the result to which he referred in his correspondence with Father Vassal Philips—that he had to put him back again!

'Why do you add to your labours by answering all those correspondents?' some one once asked him.

'I must answer them,' he responded quaintly, 'or they'll think they are out of my good books!'

Before the advent of *It Never Can Happen Again*, De Morgan heard from his old friend Mr. Vance:—

Louis Joseph Vance to William De Morgan.

'Box 38,
'Vineyard Haven,
'Massachusetts,
'*September 11th*, 1909.

'Dear Mr. De Morgan,—

'My father, having written a book, wishes me to send you a copy thereof. He says he thinks that the author of *Joseph Vance* might be interested to read a book by the author of Joseph Vance. And I think he will be, for in spite of the B's in *Big John Baldwin* it has nothing whatever in common with The Brass Bowl and The Black Bag—praises be!

'So I'm sending you the book by this post.

'Believe me, I am, with best wishes,
'Faithfully yours,
'Louis Joseph Vance.'

When De Morgan examined this volume, he found the title-page inscribed as follows:—

'*To William De Morgan, author of "Joseph Vance," from W. Vance, great-grandson, grand-nephew, cousin, son, brother and father of Joseph Vance.*'

Meanwhile the competition for the Curtis prize had taken place in America, and the best Essay had been judged to be by Henry Dennis Hammond, an undergraduate from Tennessee. This was published in the *Yale Courant*, and two copies were sent to De Morgan; one he returned, with amusing comments written on the margins, and a letter addressed to the young prize-winner, in which he says:—

'I should be very curious to know whether by chance any of the competitors have detected my special *motif* in each of my three volumes. No reviewer has hit the mark—and no one in conversation so far. So I doubt whether my own version would recommend itself to my readers, and shall just keep my own counsel about it.'

Later, in regard to this same question, he wrote to Professor Phelps: 'I meant a *motif* apiece for each volume; but I feel very unprepared to make an exact wording of it. What I meant

was, I should like to see whether any of the young competitors had caught the clue *I* catch occasionally in my own meaning. For instance, if one were to say that the dominant of Dr. Thorpe's little lecture sounds all through *Joseph Vance*, I should feel he and I were rather in communion. But I should hesitate to claim immortalism *passim* as the keynote. It would be too broad a statement.

'I should have to speak with a like reserve of both the other books—but each had a *motif*, I know. Perhaps I should screw myself to more explicitness if I had not a slight attack of 'flu. It makes one dodder!'

At this date De Morgan, at the instigation of Professor Phelps, had been reading what the latter designated 'the greatest dog story ever written, though it has a hundred readers in America to one in England.' This was a novel by a young writer, Alfred Ollivant, which was published in America under the title of *Bob, Son of Battle*, and in England as *Owd Bob*. While perusing this, he received a copy of the *Forum* which contained an article by Professor Phelps on the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward, upon receipt of which De Morgan wrote:—

'This is just to convey my thanks to you for the *Forum*. All I can say is, Heaven avert such a keen searchlight from my own misdeeds. For at present I am being let off easily, owing to literary youth and inexperience.

'I ought to know Mrs. Humphry Ward's work better than I do. But the same is true of more great authors than I can count. She has biased me a little against her works still unknown to me by going "Anti-Suffragette." I may, however, be supposing you are otherwise, too readily?

'I was grateful to you for bringing me to know *Owd Bob*—but I did think it had got the wrong title. "The Tailless Tyke" surely would have been a truer one. McAdam is lovely—I didn't care much for the lovers though. . . .'

Later he wrote:—

'I see we are of one mind that the most vivid interest of the story is in the tailless tyke and his master—nothing could be better than either. Of course one loves Bob better—but one is very wicked by nature, and picturesque fiends of all kinds must continue engrossing.'

In the same letter, in answer to Professor Phelps's condemnation of spelling reform, he remarks:—

'How I agree with you about this spelling craze! How could I else, holding as I do that to ask the way to Charing Cross is to make an *e*nquiry, but that one makes an *i*nquiry into the nature of things? My broad impression is the *e*nquiries get answers, and *i*nquiries don't. Please put this down to flu, if you see no meaning in it!'

One result of De Morgan's success in literature was that, with the complete absence of any element of pettiness in his own nature, he appreciated all the more keenly the merits of

other writers in comparison with that of the 'lazy, undeserving chap' he pictured himself to be; while his own scanty knowledge of modern literature distressed him. 'I wish I were three gentlemen in one like Cerberus!' he wrote to Professor Phelps, 'and then two of them should read books, while the other wrote human documents'; and again he says: 'I am simply horribly ashamed of the quantity of modern fiction that I do not read—(that's ill-expressed but clear in sense), and as soon as I have written my last word, I must turn-to seriously and make up for lost time—I think I must take a hint from your text, and begin with *The Return of the Native*. I read *Far From*, etc., when it came out, and *Tess* only half, a friend carrying it away when I was half-way through. That has been the fate of so many novels in my hands!'

When his friend Mr. Scott-Moncrieff sent him a volume of newly-published poems, entitled *Amor Amoris*, and the book arrived at the moment of the annual departure for Italy, De Morgan wrote afterwards describing how he and Evelyn alternately snatched the volume from each other in order to devour some especially delightful passage, till they all but lost their train in consequence. Later he remarked respecting an American review of this book:—

'I have read the quotations, as a small boy picks the currants out of a cake!

'English authors certainly meet with recognition in the U.S.A.—sometimes much *too*!—as instance me, of whom my friend Lyon Phelps at Yale deliberately said recently that I was Dickens *redivivus*, or much the same thing!

'You are more Shakespearianly Shakespeare than can easily be accounted for. It's a puzzle.

'Do you know, I thought it was the Wind you made the bridegroom of the Sea, so that my mind had to discipline itself to accept the Sun; however, it's at rest now and the Sun is as welcome. Perhaps the Sea is bigamous, if we knew.

'I congratulate { You / Mackail } on making
the acquaintance of { Mackail / Yourself }

'Love to you all from both halves here—better and worser.'

And when Mr. Moncrieff became disheartened at the lack of appreciation for poetry evinced by the public, De Morgan wrote earnestly: 'You have just got to pay no attention to what anyone thinks (except me, of course!) and leave a big lump of verse for posterity, anyhow; though for my part I hope there will be a revival of poetry and art one day soon. Believe me, the biggest man is he who pays least heed to his misfortunes, and goes on doggedly, using up the rest of the time to the best advantage. Stop! Isn't that too preachy-weachy! However, I was really thinking of the undersigned

who certainly wasted 40 years of a long life, and is sorry now.'

On another occasion, after Mr. Moncrieff had altered some verses to please him, he wrote naïvely:—

'Bravo! I like that heaps better. Nothing like nagging at a Poet! Why not send it to *The Times*? It is only a matter of chance. They must have tons of poetical MS. sent them. I sent them some lines myself a little while since, and they came back—they are very good about returning things, so one knows where one is.

'I suppose the absence of adjective is to be aimed at. Still, a poem that I account a triumph begins with *two*—Browning's "Love among the ruins" . . . Of course the omission of all the parts of speech would make a language technically perfect, and would reach the ideal of the maxim—"Least said soonest mended!"'

To Lady Glenconner, after peeping into the pages of her volume of verses entitled *Windlestraw* he wrote in delight at 'the audible voice of the book'; and his remarks recall that little babe—the 'three-toed wood-pecker'—of nearly seventy years before, poring over the fat volume of Bewick's *Birds*.

'I won't particularize poems—I should name so many it would take the edge off distinction. But you certainly have the most happy faculty of Tennysonian landscape, backed by a knowledge I envy of birds and flowers and trees. I do wish I had paid more attention to them in my time—they would come in so useful in these later days of pen-and-inkery.

'I suppose "windlestraw" is the chaff that blows from the winnowing machine? It's a word I never heard—but I dare say a common one enough in country districts.'

Of Browning he wrote:—

'I wish I had read *The Ring and the Book*—a shocking thing for a writer to say! But it's all past praying for now, for me. I refer to the study of the literæ humaniores—I scarcely looked in a book for forty long years—there's a confession!—a little exaggerated in form from chagrin at the truth of its spirit, but substantially true for all that.

'So I am really a stranger to my Browning, not having read what so many think his greatest achievement. (That's so, isn't it?)

'My ignorance of this poem must be forgotten, please, in consideration of my admiration of his shorter poems, within my grasp, and especially of the fact that my enjoyment of "John Jones" has rather than otherwise enhanced that admiration. Even so a friend once told me he had never really enjoyed the "Appassionata" sonata until a man wrote, and played, a caricature of it. But how that caricaturist must have known his Beethoven! What a knowledge of Browning must Swinburne's have been!

'The twenty-six letters of the alphabet are very powerful. If it were not for them the chief recollection of Britannia by the States would be the discomfiture of the former's butler by Uncle Sam a century or more ago. But the mere rearrangement of those 26 makes Browning and Shakespeare possible—even if the latter was really somebody else.'

After reading a book of Oscar Wilde's, he wrote:—

'What a queer fish he was! One would have thought he would have shown his cloven foot in his writings. But I cannot detect a trace. He is uniformly brilliant and fantastic—perhaps a pause might be welcome sometimes.'

In January, 1910, Professor Phelps published his *Essays on Modern Novelists*, in which the first Essay, from which quotations have been given, is devoted to William De Morgan; and this drew from the latter an interesting comment on his own work and that by his unknown friend:—

'Your book has come to hand, and—need I say?—my reading aloud to my wife of your much too high estimate of my work gave intense pleasure to both of us. For it would be merely artificial to pretend that one's *amour propre* (one's wife is included always) is a bit the less gratified because one has subcutaneous doubts of one's deserts—on the contrary, I doubt if one doesn't enjoy a good pat on the back all the more under these circumstances. Anyhow, thanks heartily!

'So far, speaking broadly, I can express my gratitude. But I don't know how to find words for my appreciation of your keen insight into the soul of the books. On p. 19 and 20 you have detected and emphasized the ingrained immortalism in J. Vance better than I have seen it done yet. I chose to write the book on these lines; but even in this, observe, I only expressed the views of my puppets. I have a right, as mere wire-puller, to keep my own views to myself. "Stet" is all I have to say about everything *they* say.

'So, on pp. 22–23 we are *d'accord*. People won't believe me generally when I tell them I love Janey better than Lossie; but it is true, and you can believe it on my assurance, as you are of the same mind. I could have drowned Lossie much more easily than Janey.

'My father's identity is divided between Thorpe and Absalom. To me it does not enter into that of Joe's father, who has no prototype in any one individual. I have not consciously used my father's humorous side in any of the books. But his immortalism was as marked as Shakespeare's or Browning's. . . .

'Of course, I go off in Mississippi mouths at the end because by then I've cotched my victim and he's just got to read or let it alone. That's *his* look out!

'My works *are*, in my own opinion, founded almost entirely on Dickens, with very rare streaks of individuality. I nearly burned Chaps. 1 and 2 of *J. Vance* because I thought the imitation too gross.

'Your collection of authors' interruptions of their text, to talk to the reader, is most amusing. Some law of limitation should check this sort of thing—I don't think any has been formulated—I notice (for my private consolation) that the only specific instance given of this vice in me comes from a chapter heading, *not* from the text. I dare say my memory is at fault, but I can call to mind no case of my talking about the story-structure as an author to the reader as its reader. . . .

However, I am the last man in the world to have any right to take exception to critiques—I have been let off so jolly easy! I put it down to my years, which sometimes impose even on their owner, and make him fancy he is grown up. . . .'

Meanwhile De Morgan was offered the degree of LL.D. by the University of Yale, and Professor Phelps wrote to urge him to come to New Haven to receive it; but he replied:—

William De Morgan to Professor Lyon Phelps.

'VIALE MILTON 19,
'FLORENCE, ITALY,
'*May* 24, 1910.

'DEAR PROF. PHELPS,—

'. . . Did I write to you of our misfortunes of last autumn? Not in full, anyhow. It came about thus: we were just leaving our old home, which was on the point of being pulled down, when my wife met with an accident—fell down in the street, and was brought home with a dislocated shoulder. The case was most grievously mismanaged, and months of trying anxiety have followed during which I have done little or no work. She may never be fit for a visit to the States, and I should not come without her. Neither am I over-fit myself, just at present—that may pass off. I am only 70, so far, and a good many folk live another decade or two, after that. However, subordinate reasons why I couldn't come hardly count, with a big insuperable in the foreground—nevertheless there *are* plenty, in the background. There is a house, standing chaotic, in Chelsea (England) waiting to be got in order. A nice confusion we have been in, with the old home of 20 years broken up, ructions with builders of a new one, broken limbs—such a combination!

'My wife uses the arm amazingly, and a Swedish masseuse really seems to be bringing about a gradual reduction of the bone to its place. But it isn't landed, yet a while, and till it is, I cannot certainly desert Mrs. Micawber, neither can she travel about, however great the temptation.

'There is very little margin for an increase in this latter article, after your invitation and the delightful latitude you offer. Thank you for it heartily.

'A short book of mine—only 400 pages of 350 words each—will appear in August, say. It is an experiment for me—quite unlike all the others. I couldn't tell at first what period it would turn out. It decided on the Restoration—and is handicapped by its author's ignorance of that date. However, that won't matter for readers who know less—and those who really are well up in Pepys and Evelyn will have to be forgiving—I have altered historical fact to suit the story, more than once—I shall be curious to see the result.

'I am sorry this letter is not what it ought to be, a promise to turn up in a month at New Haven, subject to the Comet having spared us.

'Always yours,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

'I am dreadfully sorry,' De Morgan wrote on the abandonment of this pleasant scheme, 'and should be still more so if I were young enough to do justice to my visit—and I may add strong enough, for I am feeling very shaken by my last six months. Better times may be in store, and I may yet have the happiness of shaking hands with my American friends, and looking back

to it for the rest of my spell on this side.' But when he hesitated, Heinemann put the final veto on the suggestion. 'You don't know what your reception would be in America,' he urged. 'If it got known you were going there you would be greeted with such an ovation and endless hospitality that you would never stand it; and the books would suffer.'

'I suppose,' acquiesced De Morgan, 'you mean that they would kill the poor old goose that lays the addled eggs!'

Nevertheless he wrote with deep feeling:—

'It has been an extraordinary pleasure to me to find that, Britisher born and raised as I am, I can still find American readers. I assure you that the receipt of assurances to that effect from remote regions out West, that were still in the wilds when I was old enough to read Fenimore Cooper and Catlin, have been to me a matter of rejoicing and bewilderment. All the more because it shows that Politics and Geography have completely failed in making foreigners of the two halves of a divided race that speak the same language, and will do so as long as each adopts the neologisms of the other as fast as they come from the mint.'

Throughout this date, under singularly adverse conditions—filled with anxiety about his wife, turned out of his old home, and living in an hotel in Queen's Gate—De Morgan was struggling to finish the novel respecting which he wrote to Professor Phelps, and which he usually referred to as 'the Duel Story'; but which was afterwards published under the title of *An Affair of Dishonour*. On February 19, 1909, he wrote: 'I wish I could finish it before I go to Florence, but oh dear! how my poor old head has suffered from recent events. I'm trying very hard—only the odds! *My word*!!—I don't suppose the book will begin destroying its author's reputation before next Christmas.' The summary of this story, written by himself, was as follows:—

'The story—so we are informed by a gentleman who has read it in proof—runs somewhat as follows: The hero, a dissolute married country gentleman, Sir Oliver Raydon, has inveigled from her home Lucinda, the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring squire—whom he kills in the duel which results naturally from his conduct. This is scene one.

'He cannot bring himself to the confession of what has happened, and to conceal it from Lucinda, spirits her away to a lonely residence by the sea, Kipps Manor, near Sole Bay. Here a naval battle comes off within sight of land, and a survivor who is brought ashore proves to be Lucinda's brother back from Virginia, but blinded by an explosion. He does not recognize his sister, who conceals her identity. Meanwhile Oliver, till now a mere brute and debauchee, has a new experience. He falls in love with his victim. His reluctance that she should know of her father's death increases. But it comes out, for a discarded mistress of his elicits it by means of witchcraft from a groom who had been present at the duel.

and makes him recount the whole affair in a sort of mesmeric trance to Lucinda. This leads to an *éclaircissement*. Lucinda returns to her father's house, and is followed by Oliver, now frantic to retain her love and constructing all sorts of excuses for himself. He fights a duel with her brother whose eyesight has come back to him to suit the convenience of the story, but falls in a fit on his own sword. His epileptic attacks enter into the story, as also a disposition to walk in his sleep. Then there are dreams and ghosts and a witch-trial and the Plague and—oh dear!—all sorts of things. Plenty for four-and-sixpence in all conscience!

'But such of Mr. De Morgan's readers as consider Porky Owls or Lizerann or their equivalent *de rigueur*, had better skip this book and wait for the next. It is an experiment of its author's, and may prove too great a trial for their patience.'

While this story was in process of construction, De Morgan had at one time intended that, after the arrival of Lucinda's brother, Oliver should attempt to get rid of the inconvenient visitor by drastic measures:—

'It is really impossible to have any clear idea of the story till it ends,' he wrote to Heinemann. 'Oliver, I think, knew that when the brother recovered he would have to fight him, and would have killed him by poison—or somehow—but has a fit at a crisis and spoils it, and is afraid to try again. Then he gets both up to London in the Plague, and gets the brother shut into an infected house, and not allowed out by the Authorities—he pretends he's sorry—*all sorts of fun*!'

Later, when it was pointed out to him that there were two battles of Sole Bay, one in 1665 and one in 1672, he confessed that he was not quite clear to which he had intended to refer. 'Of course my story used history as it liked . . . the fact is I have always taken full advantage of the painter's and the poet's *quidlibet audendi*—and I shall continue on the same lines. What use is History if one may not pervert it in Fiction. After all, one does the same by Fact!'

But the crux of the story, he always maintained, lay in the fact that the beauty and innocence of Lucinda remained untarnished by her contact with her betrayer, till the purity of her own soul ennobled the baseness of Oliver. 'The bits I like best,' he said, 'are the incidents at Kipps Manor; but the chief point of the story is the fact that Oliver falls in love with his victim, and is comically afraid that his love for her will not grow cold soon enough not to prove an embarrassment when she finds out, as she eventually must, that he killed her father. . . . I am constantly surprised that Sir Oliver doesn't make Lucinda sick of him—but then I am alive to the difference between her and myself. Won't she hate him neither, one of these days!'

Before its publication he wrote to Heinemann:—

'I see an advantage in bringing out now a distinct variation on the three published, and filling out an interim. The Press will probably let fly at it. But when the one I am two-thirds through comes, they will

say: "Mr. De Morgan has done wisely to take OUR advice, and return to his old muttons."'

And the Press did 'let fly at it.' The novel, both in matter and manner, was a complete departure from all De Morgan's previous work, and, as such, was received by the public with undisguised disappointment and abuse. 'A perfectly good cat that I have found in the literary ashpan,' observes one critic with a fine literary sense; 'it differs from everything that has come to us previously from the author's pen, as lifeless clay differs from living spirit.' Not only, to the annoyance of his readers, had De Morgan abandoned the Victorian period, his cockneyism, his colloquialism, and what a reviewer called 'his usual philosophic-humorous-reminiscent vein' which they had learnt to look for from his pen and to delight in, but, with a versatility wholly unexpected, he had adopted the speech, the mannerisms, the perspective of the seventeenth century, and therewith had woven a prose-poem, romantic, sombre and powerful.

'Possibly it is his finest work,' wrote Mr. Ellis in the *Fortnightly*. 'It is not an historical romance in the ordinary sense of the word . . . it is an historical picture of the time it relates to, and I know of no other work of fiction in this category, except Esmond, which has so much "atmosphere" about it, for the characters not only speak and act but *think* in the manner of their period. . . . It is like a bizarre dream from the past, suggested and accompanied by some electrical storm outside in the night.'

Yet when some one described this book to De Morgan as a *tour de force*, with his usual diffidence he replied doubtfully, 'Say, rather, a *tour de faiblesse*.' Ultimately, however, the reviewers discovered that 'It is just what we should have expected of De Morgan—the Unexpected'; while it sold with a rapidity which out-distanced its predecessors, and soon carried conviction of its success to the mind of its author.

'Ain't I satisfied neither with the Press notices!' De Morgan wrote to Heinemann later. 'See the beauty of a surprise. If Byron had written a Railway Guide and Bradshaw an Epic poem, each would have sold quicker than type would permit!

'I only believe in one thing that helps the circulation of books—their contents apart, of course. It is heated controversy in the Press about their merits. I should read the book the *Spectator* and the *Academy* came to blows about, though I might go no further than deciding to read the one both praised.'

So strong was his conviction on this point, however, that he wrote a scathing review of his own book, and was with difficulty dissuaded from publishing it. One incident, however, connected with this story interested him greatly.

In *An Affair of Dishonour* a large portion of the plot takes place on the desolate coast of Suffolk, in the salt marshes north of Dunwich, an eerie, solitary region, where De Morgan depicted the imaginary house Kipps Manor to which Oliver took Lucinda. After reading De Morgan's graphic description of this place and its surroundings, several correspondents at once wrote to point out that the Manor in question had been identified as The Stone House in the neighbourhood of the Suffolk marshland; and to Mr. Ellis, who discussed the question in the *Fortnightly*, De Morgan replied:—

'Over forty years ago I spent a month at Southwold, and heard all about Dunwich and the ancient port, and saw and enjoyed the neighbourhood. I must have retained a vivid recollection of what I saw, having not only succeeded in the landscape, but popped a house down on it that is pure invention! . . . I ought to try to identify Kipps Manor; I have no doubt that it is somewhere there and that the whole thing happened. The Stone House at Dingle looks so very likely. It is the very place that was hanging in my mind at the time of writing—only *I am absolutely sure that I never visited it.*'

About this time De Morgan was asked to pronounce an opinion on what he termed 'another "Affair of Dishonour,"' the exclusion of women from the franchise. Long years before, in his bachelor days, discussing the question with a lady, also unmarried, he had suggested a happy solution. 'I think none but married people should have votes. Then, at a General Election, the married people who hadn't got on together would vote on opposite sides; and thus the world would come to be governed by married people who *did* get on together; and who, after all, are not the worst part of the Community! Thus, by a process of natural selection, the governing body would be all the contented, amiable people!'

But at a date when the question was rending the social and political world with a rancour now, happily, of the past, for some time he maintained silence. In answer to a solemn petition that he would throw the weight of his verdict into the scale in favour of the feminine vote, he responded boyishly, 'I can't mix myself up in matters political—I should bust!' Nevertheless, deeply interested in the question, as his parents had been before him, he held it to be 'a definite question of *right* and wrong,' and some of his royalties found their way into the coffers of the W.S.P.U.

'The plain, bald truth [he wrote] is that Man, Nature's "last work who seemed so fair," seems to have fallen rather below the mark in fairness in this matter, and in fact to cut a very sorry figure. The "Splendid purpose in his eyes" seems to have been the purpose of devoting money taken

from the reluctant pockets of women to helping the democracy, of which he is sole demos, out of a difficulty, and depriving *them* of any share in the rights and privileges he has claimed for himself in return. Let him free himself from this iniquity!'

And even when the destruction of the contents of pillar-boxes proved a shock to his peace-loving nature, while deprecating the manœuvres of the militant suffragists, he viewed the matter without any sex-bias.

'I am well aware [he wrote] that an attempt to burn down a theatre—if made by a sane person—deserves to be condemned as diabolical. At any rate, I condemn it as such myself. But I am not aware that the ignition of Nottingham Castle had any claim to be considered celestial, and *that* was the example held up by implication as a legitimate proof of the political earnestness for the franchise of males desirous of a share in the management of their own affairs!'

Finally, unable any longer to hold silence, he vented his opinions unhesitatingly in the Press, while to Mr. Lansbury he wrote a letter, the conclusion of which struck a note destined to be tragically prophetic:—

'. . . One word more on another point. A flagrant injustice, due to the exclusion of women from the electorate has to my thinking received less attention than it deserves.

'I refer to men's justification of a monopoly of legislation on the ground that military service falls solely on them. Man, in England, boasts, somewhat loudly, of his superiority in this respect. But he won't submit to Conscription, not he!—that is "un-English";—still he is ready to die, if necessary, facing fearful odds, for the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods. It won't come to that, however, he feels confident, because there's the Home Fleet, and Tommy Atkins and the Territorials are quite strong enough to give a good account of any straggling expedition that gets past that obstacle. *He* will never be called on to give an exhibition of his prowess. Meanwhile his conscience is clear, for he pays the piper!

'Does he? Ask Mr. Lloyd George, whom I suppose to be the metaphorical piper in this case, what share of the bawbees in his sporran have come from the pockets of women.

'At least let the wives and mothers of the proposed corpses in the next War have a voice in the National decisions that relate to it! Let them have their say in a system which bids fair—if the Devil breaks loose again in Europe—*and I don't trust him*!—to send their husbands and sons to be shot down like a battue of pheasants, before they have learnt to handle a gun.

'At any rate, do not let us be influenced by considerations which have nothing to do with the subject. Forget those pillar-boxes!'

CHAPTER XV

'UNLIKELY STORIES' AND 'GHOSTS'

1910–1914

AMONG the letters which reached De Morgan in 1910 was one from a former schoolmate of whom he had lost sight during half a century, and who on hearing from him wrote back delightedly: 'You must know that since I received your letter, I went out and invested in five cents' worth of marbles, and *hunted up another boy of my own age* to have a game—it so impressed me with the feeling that I was again in Gower Street!' Shortly afterwards, he received a letter from a cousin of whom he had lost sight for a similar period, a son of his father's sister *née* Eliza De Morgan, to whom he wrote in reply:—

William De Morgan to the Rev. Augustus De Morgan Hensley.

'*August 19th*, 1910.

'MY DEAR GUS,—

'Fifty years are nothing. Time is only an abstraction. I remember Camden Street now quite vividly—more so than some later whereabouts.

'I can remember where the piano stood that you and Alice played duets on, in the parlour with 3 windows looking out on the garden. [A plan of the room and furniture is appended.] Probably you played the "Witches in Macbeth" or "The Manly Heart with love o'erflowing"—I remember both as strong features of her repertoire.

I have by me memorials of that time that I believe you will remember—two water-colour copies of my mother's (at XX). Also (only it has gone to be repaired) the table with queer feet my father wrote all his books at. It clung to me through all my endless changes of purpose and employment, and stood for years in lumber rooms. Now it is to be resuscitated for me to try to write more novels on.

'You know, I dare say, how queer a life I have had. It was towards the end of that Camden St. time that I was seized with the unhappy fancy that I had a turn for the Fine Arts. I paid no heed to the wisest and best man I have ever known—my father of course—and went my own headstrong way. His words to me were, "If you work hard and *read*, Willy, especially Latin and Greek, you will live to write something worth reading. But as to painting, how can I tell knowing nothing of it." Well! I went my own way and wasted an odd 40 or 50 years. All one can say is, things have turned out better than I deserved. I put a good deal of myself into Charles Heath in *Alice-for-Short*.

'I have never heard of you without deciding that I must make an effort and put an end to our curious and reasonless divarication. It has

been so with so many of my early associations from which (or whom) I have parted absolutely without a trace of the usual tiff that is responsible for family dispersal. I think lazy self-absorption in the fad of the moment has been my contribution to the results.

'My books and the correspondence they bring remind me every day what a-many links I have allowed to snap.

'A school-fellow of the Camden Street days wrote to me lately from Canada saying (as you did) that I should be surprised to be called "*dear Willy*"; quite fifty years had passed but that was the name he remembered me by. He's an old soldier, at Toronto. Then, a year ago, a letter came to me from Monte Carlo from a lady who had been reading my books. She apologized for writing on the ground that her husband was a second cousin of mine. She was Mrs. Underwood French—our grandmother's sister's daughter-in-law. Are you learned enough in your family to be able to feel at home over this? I saw them in London after. He also remembered Camden Street and Alice. He gave me a family tree of the second cousin generation, seventy or eighty families in all—mercy on us!

'I dare say, though, you gave up your mother's family in despair if ever you tried to elucidate it. I have a book about it in my father's handwriting that would interest you, and you might be able to contribute traditions.

'I used to hear of you in your Haileybury days from Crom Price, who was, or had been, a classical tutor there.

'My wife and I live now more in Florence than in London, but we have lost so many friends there by death of late that the place is a sad one, compared to what it was twenty years since when we wintered there first.

'I am only just getting to work again after months of disturbance (my wife's accident made hay of all last winter and much spring).

'You have a claim of seniority (dwindling with time, as it always does) and if there is no chance of you in Chelsea, I must cast about for opportunities—and till I find one, remain in defiance of those 60 years.

'Afftly. yours,

'WM. DE MORGAN.

'Two ancient letters I came upon to-day—one from our Granny; the other, from my mother, is one written to Alice (aged 4) after she went to bed.

'I expect the references to interest you as they do me. One cannot use the word *amuse* about old letters. I always feel sad over the merriest of them.'

It was not till the autumn of 1910 that De Morgan and his wife were settled in their new home, 127 Church Street, where they had characteristically purchased two old houses, and at great expense and unnecessary trouble turned them into one somewhat inconvenient new one. When a friend condoled with them on the loss of the loved and vanished Vale, De Morgan at once replied contentedly: 'We have decided not to take that view at all. We walk there sometimes and are very much interested in what is going on. The mulberry trees belonging to our old garden are still standing.'

Further to reconcile them to their new surroundings, they had purchased an Angelus. Both passionately fond of music, and insatiable attendants at concerts, neither could spare the time necessary to become musicians; therefore despite his life-long devotion to the Waldstein Sonata, De Morgan, playing

on his new acquisition daily, declared that it had first revealed Beethoven to him. To Professor Mackail he wrote:—

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'*Sept.* 19*th*, 1910.

'MY DEAR JACK,—

'I thought you weren't back—(I hope your qualifications will enable you to appreciate that couplet). So I have not been round your way.

'We have got settled in here at last, i.e., we have got to the period in which the electric bells begin to get out of order. The hot water apparatus hasn't begun transgressing yet—it will. . . .

'You must come along some day next week and see the house.

'You must promise not to look at our Angelus we've bought, only that mustn't be held to imply any contract on my part not to look at your Angela.

'I am glad you are looking me out blunders in a A.F.O.D. [*An Affair of Dishonour*]—there are plenty. A little before the last re-issue of I.N.C.H.A. [*It Never Can Happen Again*] I sent off forty-two corrections of slips, large and small. This book will sell more than the others.

'Our loves to you—extremely.

'Yours faithfully, and no 'umbugging,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

Later he wrote to Miss Holiday: 'We have got a new Erard for the Pianola to play on—the P. much prefers it to its first love'; and Miss Holiday, going to inspect the new acquisition, wrote of this visit:—

'I was having luncheon with them at the time when the Crippen murder was engrossing public attention. It certainly was as Dickens says "a highly popular murder," but I thought it extremely horrid and avoided the long reports of it; so that it gave me rather a shock to find De Morgan as keenly interested in it as anyone, till I suddenly realized that to him, the great novelist, it presented itself as an enormously interesting study, both in regard to its motive and its execution. I remember we had some jugged rabbit for luncheon; it was rather a mysterious dish, but not unpalatable; De Morgan, however, took a great dislike to it, vowing that Crippen must have had a hand in providing its dismembered ingredients; and referred to it afterwards in a letter in very abusive and apologetic terms.'

William De Morgan to Winifred Holiday.

'*Nov.* 15*th*, 1910.

'MY DEAR WINNIE,—

'The reason I am hurrying off the volumes I tried to inflict upon you is that I really seriously do want to hear that you have survived the garbage you got to eat here.

'*I* say it was *cat*. Do write and say you are doing well.

'I have just made such a good joke—like them your daddy and me and poor Simeon Solomon used to make in the days of old.

'Q. Why is the Seine unlike any other river?

'Ans. Because it's never the Seine two days together.

'Of course you'll try to make believe that this is along of that there Angelus.

'*Nov.* 18*th.*

'It turns out that a "Scotch Hare" (which was the *cat*) is a specimen of rabbit that the best of cooks may jug in vain. As long as it wasn't jugged *Crippentity* I am satisfied. We have all had something to eat since.

'Your affectionate Angelus,

'WILLIAM DE MORGAN.'

'I wonder why other folks' garbage is always so much nicer than our garbage?' he observed tentatively one day, looking round his well-covered dinner-table. In regard, however, to the interest which he exhibited in the Crippen trial, it may be remarked that Burke, De Quincey, Tennyson, and Jowett all frankly admitted the fascination which they found in following the details of a great murder drama.

That same month, De Morgan was invited to be the guest of honour at a dinner given by the Society of Authors, but his distress was great when he discovered that he was expected to make a speech. 'Partly for physical, partly for intellectual, and partly for selfish reasons'—he explained, 'but very little for the last—I am obliged to refuse anything which involves speech—am doing so every day, and feeling ashamed of myself and small.' This time no plausible means of escape presented itself; but so nervous was he that he begged his wife and his relations not to be present on the dreaded evening, lest he should disgrace himself by breaking down. Subsequently he wrote to his brother-in-law:—

William De Morgan to Spencer Pickering, F.R.S.

'*Nov.* 27*th*, 1910.

'DEAR SPENCER,—

'The dinner was just like any other huge dinner, except that sometimes the grub *is* good, and other places are no criterion of the Criterion where it is always bad.

'I had misapprehended my importance in the concern, and found myself painfully conspicuous. I am not used to the SKY.

'I think my speech was a failure, but it was so ill-delivered that people may think it would have been good if they could have heard it. It will come out complete in *The Author*—that is, a faked version of it, as near as I could recollect, with some things I meant to say and forgot.

'I'm very glad Evelyn didn't go—I should have busted up altogether.

'I complained to one or two friends in the audience, after, of their not making a row when I stuttered, to drown my confusion. But they said, "We were so anxious to hear what you were going to say!"

'Evelyn says I oughtn't to have burnt a feeble portrait of myself in a top hat in the *Graphic*—but have sent it on—but really even the patience of a Saint has its limits. I'm a Saint (I'm something else if I'm not).'

A fortnight later, in regard to an address delivered by Professor Mackail, De Morgan wrote enthusiastically, echoing once more, unchanged, the sentiments of earlier years:—

'*Dec.* 8*th*, 1910,

'127 CHURCH STREET.

'MY DEAR JACK,—

'Now that I've been *reading you* for an hour instead of *writing me* I can write heartfelt thanks to you for delivering the address at Birmingham.

'I think if some dozens of parties who call themselves Socialists could be strangled, I would join the communion of the remainder without pestering it to know what Socialism is—(after all that is merely an Academical matter—and we don't know what anything else is, to speak of !).'

'I don't see anything to quarrel with in it as you seem to define it on P. 26 except that on those terms so many people's Galileanism has forestalled it—and in two syllables longer if you come to that !

'Adieu till June—unless you come to Florence—we can put you up, as Christie and Manson said to the modern picture.

'Margot's and yours affectionately,

'WM. DE MORGAN.'

The Christmas which followed was the first De Morgan had spent in England for many years, but his health no longer gave cause for anxiety. For six months, however, owing to the unsettled conditions consequent upon his change of home, he had been unable to write a line: 'A really good thing!' he explained, 'as during the last five years I have published over a million and a quarter words!' Throughout 1911, while working at a long novel which he had for some time had on hand, at Heinemann's request he prepared for the Press a short book which, at first called *Bianca*, was finally published in 1912 under the title of *A Likely Story*. 'Compared with Joe it is a mere anecdote,' he wrote cheerfully, 'to my thinking, the shortness of the story should cover a multitude of sins.' It had, in fact, been originally intended by him for a Magazine article, but, elaborated with fresh material, it had some years previously been shown to Mr. Lawrence, whose adverse criticism drew from its author the most cordial gratitude.

'As to the actual story,' De Morgan explained, 'I seriously thought of calling it *An Experiment in Nonsense*.'

'I have heard (or shall some day !) a story about an eminent author who was discovered weeping on a seat on Chelsea Embankment, and when they asked him or her, "Why do you weep, Sir or Madam?" replied: "Because other parties don't like my tit-bits, Ohonarie!" I believe he really voiced the experience of a-many book butterflies of my sort! I'll tell you which bits I really liked in this piece of gammon, (1) Sairah [the maid of all work]; (2) Sir Stopleigh's family reminiscences; (3) Madoline's talks with the dawg.'

One thing, however, in connexion with this book puzzled him greatly. 'I am anxious to dress one of the characters in a coat which will denote affluence,' he said, 'so I went into a fur-shop to ask if a musquash coat was expensive for me to give my heroine; and the Zoological knowledge of the shopkeepers astonished me. What sort of animal is a 'seal-coney,' or a mole-musquash? and, above all, what *is* a 'coney-leopard'?

The present writer explained these knotty points to the best of her ability. De Morgan, it should be mentioned, had, on occasions, compared her to Miss Larkins who 'had a bright

taste in bonnets'; and when the first copy of *A Likely Story* reached her, it bore the inscription in the author's writing :—

'From a seal-colour musquash to a magenta bird of Paradise.'

This novel, which was dedicated to 'The Scientific Enquirer,' has been described as 'a compound of satire and the supernatural.' To that section of the public who had complained bitterly of the absence in *An Affair of Dishonour* of the 'Early Victorianism' and the 'suburbanity' which had proved such a great attraction in his previous works, *A Likely Story* is described by the author as an 'honest, if humble attempt, to satisfy all parties. . . . It combines on one canvas the story of a family incident that is purely Victorian with another of the Italian cinquecento, without making any further demand on human powers of belief than that a picture is made to talk. I have also introduced a very pretty suburb, Coombe, as the residence of the earliest Victorian Aunt, to my thinking, that my pen is responsible for. . . .' Both this aunt and niece, it may be added, served to furnish a delicate piece of satire upon the tone adopted by many women of that date towards those who differed from themselves on the vexed question of female suffrage, especially 'Aunt Priscilla,' who, able to define to a nicety the proper sphere of her sex, 'objected to anyone leaving the groove, even with the motive of pushing others back into it.'

Nevertheless, despite many exquisite bits of writing, the book, as a whole, was unconvincing. The constant intrusion of modern life and modern remarks into an atmosphere highly charged with a grim mediævalism seemed to interrupt the most absorbing part of the narrative, and, despite the ingenuousness of the telling, to militate against its realism. The fact was that the 'trail' of the reviewer 'was over it all.' The author, in an amiable anxiety to please the Press and the Public, was endeavouring to mould his talent to suit the 'many-headed.' 'A slump from a quarter to a twentieth of a million words marks a powerful self-restraint on the part of my "cacoëthes scribendi,"' he urged. 'I do not understand that anyone has, so far, propounded the doctrine that a short story cannot be too short!' In extenuation of the improbability of the tale he, however, pointed out 'what a flat tragedy Hamlet would have been without its fundamental ghost,' and he pleaded for 'like rights for the tittlebat and the leviathan.' In consequence he received several letters addressed to 'William Tittlebat De Morgan,' one of which remarks: 'There is one quality which I am sure no novel of yours will ever lack; I mean its "de Morganism—shall I write it "dem-Organism"?—and so long as it is dem-organic, I don't much mind what other qualities its possessor lacks, as I, personally, suffer from chronic De Morganitis.'

Two events of this year were a great pleasure to him—o was that in Florence, in April, he met his hitherto unkno correspondent and critic, Professor Phelps; the other that, the following October, he at last made the acquaintance of l literary godson, Mr. Louis Joseph Vance. 'I was beginni to wonder what had become of my old correspondent!' wrote joyfully on receiving the news of Mr. Vance's presen in London. 'Don't call—come to dinner, and dress or n exactly as convenient—we are the most elastic people in Chels on that score!' But Mr. Vance was determined not to m the chance of creating a good impression: 'I shall pretty mys up fit to kill!' he rejoined.

At the close of 1912, De Morgan wrote to Professor Phelps:

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA, S.W.,
'*Dec.* 31, 1912.

'MY DEAR PROF. PHELPS,—

'For some time past I have been wishing you the happiest and m prosperous of Xmasses and New Years; as the last is to hand, I see reason for observing secrecy any longer, and send a line to say so—addi that my wishes hold good for the remaining 365 days of the year.

'What a funny thing language is! To *wish* in this context means *express a wish*—just as to *believe* means to profess a belief.

'I have nothing to write about, except to thank you cordially for yo book on education, though any book on that subject is a standing reproa on my bookshelves for my own want of it. Since I took to bookwriti this want has been more and more borne in upon me with every fre pen-dip of Stephens's Blue Black—I can fill out this page though, with discovery I have made that will interest you—I have found that Engli poetry from Chaucer to 1750 *circa* is worth exactly twenty shilling For—listen! A while back a line ran into my head from a buried pas

"The ratiocinations specious
Of Aristotle and Smiglesius";

and, although some one said *Hudibras*, I said *Swift*, and got at the Dear poems to prove it, but failed—couldn't find it!—was set a-thinking Anderson's *British Poets* in my father's library—wished I had a co now—set a bookseller to hunt me up a copy, who found me one, for o *pound*, in the original board, with rough uncut edges, that had apparent been book-shelved since it left the printers—not a page spoiled! I open at hazard—Swift's Poems, and before my eyes the italics "Homo e ratione præditum!" next door to the above couplet. Now wasn't th a funny chance?

'What were the odds when a century and more ago some fox-hunti squire put that book up in his library to help him towards Parnassus, th *I* should be the first to open the copy? However, thereat speculati stands aghast.

'Excuse this new year's nonsense—and accept best of wishes fro self and wife for 1913.

'Yours always,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

About this date De Morgan was also much interested to me Mrs. E. M. Ward, the mother of Sir Leslie Ward, who had been resident in Fitzroy Square during the period when he had be

working at stained glass in the basement of No. 40. 'It is funny to me,' he wrote to Mr. Ellis, respecting this meeting, 'to think that Fitzroy Square was over five years t'other side of half-way back to my baby recollections of Fordhook—say 1845—1870—1912—very rough figures.' Yet such unavoidable recognition of the advance of 'dull Eld' engendered but little regret on his part, even as he continued to contemplate with unruffled equanimity the prospective approach of that companion Form 'with Darkness round its brows.' 'I shall burn out without spitting and fizzing, I hope,' he makes one of his fictitious characters remark contentedly. 'Still, it's one of the quarrels I have with my Creator that, with all the unlimited resources of Omnipotence, He could not contrive some less awkward and repulsive way of winding up Life than Death. And to make matters worse, one is decently interred. It is no use pretending that God did not make undertakers, because they have just as good a claim to be considered His Creatures as Members of Society!' And again in this connexion he wrote:—

'I long ago gave up paying the slightest attention to diseases' names. There are really only two sorts, those that kill, and those that permit of a *modus vivendi*. I prefer the first. The *modus* is never a comfortable one for their . . . client—suppose we say—however satisfactory to themselves. But what fun it would be to be a pain in the head of somebody one hated! How one would come on, and get worse, and never yield to treatment!'

Meanwhile throughout the winter of 1912–13, he was working wearily at a novel which seemed to him interminable. 'One volume is past praying for!' he wrote to Heinemann, 'but by all means let us pray! I think I shall take to writing Magazine Serials with lots of Pirates and Revolvers.' Later he pointed out: 'It can never pay you at six bob. It is really the equivalent of three six-bobbers. . . . It is too long for its merits.' At last he observed in desperation: 'I really think this awful book had better be hung up until some way presents itself of dealing with it. . . . You know what *I* should do—I should print a shilling sample and issue the remainder if called for!'

The story in question, which was then called *The Twins of Darenth Mill*, turns on the separation for sixty years of twin sisters, and their discovery as octogenarians that each had been deceived by a dastardly trick into thinking the other dead. The subsidiary characters, the beautiful Lady Gwen and her lover; the elder couple, the Honble. Percy Pellew and Miss Smith-Dickensen; the inhabitants of Ancaster Towers, from Lady Ancaster downwards; the denizens of Sapp's Court—Uncle Mo', the old prize-fighter, Aunt M'riar, his meek daughter, married to the villain of the piece, Mr. Wix of many aliases, the little children Dave and Dolly, in whose tiny hands are the threads of Destiny; even Julia, the barmaid, and Michael Ragstroar, the

inimitable street gamin, all were instinct with life and—so thought many—with immortality. But De Morgan, weary with the strain of eight years' incessant work, could see no good in the production, of which he said that he had written 30,000 words before any plot unfolded itself; and the necessity for compression harassed him.

William De Morgan to William Heinemann.

'*July 12th*, 1913.

'I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for wading all through this enormous book. It is an indescribable relief to me to have the detailed impression of another mind.

'I go rather further than you do in the same direction. I want the whole book rewritten, with another subject.

'The difficulty is, not in amputating the hands of Briareus, but in taking up the arteries. And it is an instance in which no author's mortified vanity can come in—the seeming superfluity of Mrs. Tapping and Mrs. Riley. There—I can cut *them* out easily!

'But I shrink from Chapter XXXIII.

'As for the Dickensen-Pellew business, they *could* be ripped out—by Michaelmas perhaps!—I have no personal objection to their coming out as I could make a story of them, and use everything. But I have 3 objections otherwise—thus:

'(1) The removal of the contrast between the two ways of making love would damage the story.

'(2) I want them as *explanatories* in the tag-end chapter.

'(3) My wife is devoted to them—says they are one of the best parts.[1]

'Let us face the abominable fact boldly! I have written a beastly book that won't go into one volume. To reduce it (to one vol. point) is a more troublesome task by far than writing a new book, and would take longer.

'I believe the underlying fact to be that the subject is essentially impossible. It is an experiment that has failed. I suggest hanging it up—and if it ever comes out it should be under the title of "An Unpublished Novel."'

The subsequent progress of the work is marked by a series of running comments also addressed by the author to the publisher.

'*August 5th*. I am just grinding out the pages of this d—d story.

'*August 10th*. If brought out as two books it can run thus:

The Twins of Darenth Mill.
Vol. I. A Shortage of Mud.
Vol. II. When Ghost meets Ghost.

'By doing this we shall avoid the odd titles as the current description of the book, and yet it will, to my thought, benefit by their rumness. They are strictly in order, as the whole evolution of things turns on that dollop of clay in the second chapter, and the purpose of the book, if any, turns on the resemblance of the two old ladies to a pair of chance Cimerians, old acquaintances on this side of Styx, who turn up on t'other.

'I well weighed your suggestion of removing the Pellews, but found

[1] 'The love-affairs of the Hon. Percy Pellew and Miss Smith-Dickensen attain a plane of high comedy worthy of George Meredith at his best.'—Criticism in *The Times*.

HELEN OF TROY

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topmost towers of Ilium?"

Painted by Evelyn De Morgan in 1898.

[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

the task of doing so would be too stiff for me. It intersects far more than appears on the surface. My wife likes the contrast of the two courtships—the respectable-tentative and the headlong-decisive one, and says she would have had a divorce if I had drasticated it.

'*August 22nd.* Come to dinner! It would give my wife the opportunity of showing the courage of her opinions that that blessed book of mine won't bear splitting.

'*Sept. 3rd.* I am horribly penitent for a big blunder. Mea Culpa! Some of the chapters were improperly numbered! The effect was that you read Chapter 20 three chapters too soon. That is to say, Pellew carried the old woman upstairs *three chapters before the accident which incapacitated her*. Perfectly fatal, *I* should say.

'Lor bless you! my memory isn't worth the brains it dwells in!

'*October 26th.* I am so work-struck with proofs, I can't get to see you. That's where Euclid had the best of us—*his* proofs needed no correction.

'*Dec. 23rd*, 1913. I have been fearfully busy getting to the end of this blessed book that has been on my shoulders for near two years past. It's *done* now, and I feel like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* when his burden slipped from his shoulders. It will be issued in February. Very few will read through the 900 pages; but to hope that anyone will is to wish him long life.'

To Mr. Vance at this date he wrote:—

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA, S.W.,
'*November 13th*, 1913.

'I have just read your book *Joan* with great interest and pleasure. It seems to me very unlike the others I have of yours. This one is much more concrete, and one takes for granted that it is Nature that is reflected in the mirror, because of the force and vividness of the reflection. I myself belong to the stodgy and fogey circles that never go it, and never can go it, in the nature of things. So whether Joan is a possible character or all out of your own head—how can I tell? She convinces me of herself, on paper, and of the mire of the stage coulissier in New York, probably elsewhere. It is a mere chance that my knowledge of the stage world is different. It is very slight.

'I have been very much amused guessing the meanings of the slang. I suppose "can that bunk" means "carry away that refuse in a can." Is that right?

'I have just completed a long nightmare of about 400,000 words. I will send you a copy when it comes out. But you mustn't read mine because I read yours!—that wouldn't be fair measure. Sample the first 100,000.'

The next spring he wrote:—

'I'm so glad you find *Ghosts* readable. What a-many years it is now since I first heard how I had taken your name without knowing it!

'And what a lot of books we have written since then!'

The new novel had at last made its appearance under the title of *When Ghost Meets Ghost*. For the general reader it was decided to compress it into one volume ('the book too big and the print too small!' lamented De Morgan); but a two volume edition was printed at the author's expense, for his private satisfaction.

'I think the book may be going to be a success,' he wrote tentatively to Heinemann. 'Viesseux [the librarian in Florence] is sending every copy out with a printed request that it shall be returned in three days.'

'Viesseux,' rejoined Heinemann, 'must be a humorist if he gives his clients *three days* in which to read this book!'

None the less, the novel was joyfully hailed by the public as a return to De Morgan's earlier manner. 'Long though the book is,' pronounced the Press, 'there is never a word that does not convey some rousing bit of characterization, or some highly original bit of humour. . . . There are two ways of being long of speech: one is to use many words in saying something of little interest, the other is to have many interesting things to say.' One critic in far-away Kentucky, with delicate imagination, thus described the fashion of the workmanship:—

'Yes, it is leisurely, and it requires unlimited leisure to read it. His methods recall those of a lace-maker—one of those long-ago lace-makers who made what they call "pillow-lace." Innumerable little reels this lace-maker had, all dangling in the air and flying about, apparently in the most inconsequent manner, but, just when the eye was dizzy with the fascination of following her glancing hands, lo! there was a neat finished pattern, with every thread in place. So does Mr. De Morgan dangle his threads with no visible result for a long time, and then, just when one begins to wonder if anything really is going to happen, and what it is all about, the pattern takes shape and all the loose threads are neatly knotted into position.'

Most critics, however, recognized that it was impossible to give any adequate synopsis of the plot. 'Mr. De Morgan,' wails one reviewer, 'has dedicated his new novel to "The Spirit of Fiction"—and little wonder! It begins with Chapter o and ends, after many lengthy ones, with a Pendrift on page 862!' But De Morgan had forestalled the accusation of prolixity. 'The omission of half'—he admits in the book, with delightful effrontery, 'would shorten the tale, and spare the reader so much. What a very small book the History of the World would be if all the events were left out!' Furthermore he decided, 'It is sometimes rather flattering to find that the writer of a very laudatory review hasn't read the book. As for instance one who thinks that Mr. Wix married Lady Gwen and describes how Uncle Mo' killed the Sweep, Peter Gunn.' Yet to those who had conscientiously endeavoured to master the intricacies of the plot he accorded his profound commiseration. . . . 'What an arduous task it must be to get up a review of 900 pages! I don't wonder critics object to the length. I have read one review, a long newspaper column of small print, embodying a careful analysis of the story, and wondered how much the writer, poor fellow, got for it! Certainly it should have been £5—I suspect it was nearer £2.'

Within a week of publication a second impression of the novel was required, and within a fortnight, a third. 'The success of this book,' wrote De Morgan on February 21, 'is a great relief to me, for I felt it was like Joe over again—would be a great success or go quite flabby. I have not seen more than three reviews yet, but one of those was *The Times*—I suppose it has rarely fallen to the lot of any author to read a more gratifying one—and I am truly grateful to the writer of it. But he ascribes too much optimism to me! However, I am glad my books produce that effect, because there are plenty of the other sort.'

To those readers who were anxious to identify each place and person, he explained that Sapps Court where much of the action takes place was one of his own elusive Ghosts. He remembered it distinctly, as it was half a century before, off Tottenham Court Road, and described it as he recalled it; but when he went to verify his description, he looked for it in vain. It had vanished; and even its correct name eluded his recollection.

Nevertheless, the unconscious relation by him in fiction of events previously, or subsequently, duplicated in real life, again occurred in connexion with this book. At a moment when the Press was discussing the probability of the story, a newspaper cutting was sent to him from Indianapolis, containing a paragraph which bore the heading '*Sisters meet after Sixty Years.*' This related how two sisters, Miss Emily Mayo, of London, and Mrs. Sarah Mayo-Glasgow, of Galena, had met once again in romantic fashion after a sixty-years' separation:—

'Mr. William De Morgan,' concluded the paragraph, 'writes about "impossible things" which happen after his books appear. This event, curiously enough, coincides with the sixty-years' separation of two sisters which is the basis for the title of his last novel; and, strangely too, this is only one of several instances when the seeming improbability of Mr. De Morgan's fiction has been confounded by fact after the book in question appeared!'

Among the letters which he subsequently received, the following greatly interested him:—

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'RURAL FREE DELIVERY ROUTE I,
'TILTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE, U.S.A.,
'*April* 2, 1914.

'MY DEAR SIR,—

'Perhaps you will forgive the liberty I take in writing you when you hear the rather unusual way in which your books are read and loved in this family of two—a father and daughter—living in a kind of wilderness in the mountain region of New Hampshire.

'We left a Massachussetts city several years ago—there were three of us then—to come to this little farm, my father's boyhood home, where he wished, as he said, to spend his second childhood. As we are six

miles from post office and town in a sparsely inhabited hamlet, you can believe that books mean more to us than ever before. We brought a part of our old library with us, but fiction, particularly modern fiction, is hardly represented at all, as my father cannot be induced to read it—with the exception of Tolstoi and now you. His reading aloud to us consisted chiefly of old classics with an occasional Tolstoi tale, until *Alice-for-Short* appeared among us.

'Then began a wonderful era. The days, largely filled with the arduous and perplexing problems of housework, to which we were unaccustomed, took on a new brightness—for, every morning, breakfast was followed by a reading from *Alice-for-Short*. Brief as they were (for we were allowed only a few pages a day—though they grew somewhat longer as time went on) we were transported into the enchanted world of Alice and Peggy and all the others. The reading was slow, with many interruptions, such as "That is Shakespearian"—"This man is a wonderful psychologist," "What a vocabulary he has!" "That is like De Foe," etc. My father's reading is always slow, with many pauses. His reading aloud to his family is a long-established institution, dating back to my earliest childhood, when we listened to Grimm, *Æsop's Fables*, *Alice in Wonderland*, tales of Greek Mythology—never more than one tale in an evening. It is impossible to tell you of the joy this book *Alice-for-Short* gave us. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say those readings have exceeded all literary pleasures of my life. During household duties I had the previous chapters to think of and the next one to look forward to. With no concerts, plays, art exhibitions or calls, this was our chief recreation.

'There came a sad day when the book was finished, so can you imagine what it meant for us to welcome *Somehow Good*?—just as absorbing, original and enchanting as *Alice-for-Short*. Next—for us—came *Joseph Vance*. We quoted Christopher Vance as we had quoted Peggy's father and mother. We laughed and wept and admired. When, during *An Affair of Dishonour*, some one made a criticism, the reader said: "I have put myself in Mr. De Morgan's hands—I shall not find fault with him. I believe in letting an artist practise his art in his own way. You remember the answer Turner made when a fellow artist said in looking at The Burial of Sir David Wilkie—'Haven't you made those sails too black?' 'If there was anything blacker than black I'd use it!'"

'*It Never Can Happen Again* contained the masterly portrait of the mischievous, meddlesome Mrs. Eldridge. After *A Likely Story*—with Sairah, Mr. Aiken's memorable search for his tube of transparent Oxide of Chromium and the romantic Italian tale—we wondered if Mr. De Morgan were writing another novel. While waiting we had had *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, besides Henry James's *A Small Boy and Others* and the Charles Eliot *Norton Letters*. One book of modern fiction my father had been persuaded to read—but it was of no use to propose another. But there came a Red Letter Day when a post card told us of a new De Morgan—*When Ghost Meets Ghost*. We sent one day and it came two days later.

'We have read only about half of those wonderful pages—(only two of us to read now—first we were three—then four—now my father and I are alone) I cannot tell you what these evening readings are to us—only about twelve pages at a time—but if we end with the close of a chapter I console myself with the fascinating synopsis of the new one.

'Even if I had the gift of expressing myself in writing, which I have not, I doubt if I could convey to anyone the pleasure I have in your books. I can only say there have never before been novels so delightful. The beautiful leisure that pervades them—the portrayal of childhood—youth—

age—the good and evil in your people—the exquisite humour—the high moral atmosphere—the things one has observed but never before seen expressed—the things one never would have thought of if you had not pointed them out—the love-making—the pathos—the dwellers in slums—the good doctors—the many details which are never tedious—above all the charm of your people and their surroundings—my father and I have felt all this and much more. I only wished to tell you of our gratitude for all you have given us during these last rather lonely years—and I am afraid I have been tedious and stupid.

'Asking your forgiveness for the intrusion.

'I am,

'Gratefully yours,

'(Miss) OLIVE RUSSELL.'

William De Morgan to Miss Olive Russell.

'VIALE MILTON,

'FLORENCE, ITALY,

'19.4.14.

'DEAR MADAM,—

'Your letter will find a special place among the many I have received from your countrymen. I am often sorry that the publication of a number of these would be so very egotistic—as it certainly would—because they are so full of insight into the rationale of fiction, and take so just a view of its relation to its author.

'As for instance what you tell me in your letter of your father's reception of the *Affair of Dishonour*; this has always been rather a favourite child of mine as it was very difficult to rear—or write—such children are—but it was worth making the attempt once to write outside my experience. I may never try the experiment again, but I see nothing to discourage me from doing so in the comments of those who have read it all through, so far as they have reached me. I need not say that the opinions of critics who mistook it for an historical novel have had no weight with me. It is not an historical novel as all the characters are imaginary.

'Anyhow, your father's belief in letting an artist write in his own way is the soundest position to see fiction from, and I wish the activities of the Press were more influenced by it.

'I am sorry I kept you waiting so long for *When Ghost Meets Ghost*. I had no intention of making it more than half the length, but it got the bit in its teeth. I hope to remain on this planet long enough to finish another—but who can say?

'Let me thank you cordially for writing such a welcome letter. All such letters are welcome to authors, and I think none of them pretend otherwise. If they do they are story-tellers—in the vernacular sense.

'Believe me, very truly yours,

'WILLIAM DE MORGAN.'

Professor Lyon Phelps to William De Morgan.

'*May 5th*, 1914.

'DEAR MR. DE MORGAN,—

'My wife and I have each read every word of your *Ghosts* with the keenest delight. I really cannot express my admiration for the wonderful skill in construction, and my pleasure in becoming acquainted with such men and women.

'This is the MS. I saw in Florence in April 1912;—the most "Demorgany" book of all, you said it would be, and you were right. It is a wonderful book, and happy am I to be living just now.

'I hope you are both happy in your labours. I wish I could see you

again, but we are not coming over this year, and you won't come hither, I suppose. Please give Mrs. De Morgan our greetings, and believe me

'Admiringly and affectionately yours,

'WM. LYON PHELPS.'

William De Morgan to Professor Phelps.

'127 CHURCH STREET,

'CHELSEA, S.W.,

'*May* 17, 1914.

'DEAR PROF. PHELPS,—

'I was much pleased to get your letter and hear that you had read —and survived—*Ghosts*. I have just answered a letter from a gentleman who started reading on March 18th and finished April 21st. And yet he wrote to thank the author! I do really feel that this is a most good-natured world.

'I should think it must have been the one I was tinkering two years ago when you came to us on the Mugnone. At the same time another thing I had been working on—which I am now half-way through—may have been the exact one, as it is, if anything, more demorganatic still—I hope to issue it in (say) 1916.[1]

'We have left Florence for good. My wife's pictures have almost all arrived here—and will live in a big studio near by with no one to look at them! We went for a fortnight to Venice, the most delicious place in the world! Coming here is like Stygian gloom after Greece—or was, till yesterday.

'No,—I can't come across to see you, in spite of the temptation. Nevertheless I hope we may meet again in this world, and the next.

'Thank you very sincerely indeed for your over-estimate of my pen-stragglings. My wife joins in my affectionate good wishes to you and yours.

'Yours always,

'WM. DE MORGAN.'

'Florence has grown too melancholy to live in,' wrote De Morgan at this date; and in consequence of this decision, the pictures which his wife had painted there were fortunately conveyed by sea to England before the events which followed precluded her returning to Italy. They consisted of eight large canvases and some smaller, and they filled the empty studio where they were housed with a wealth of colour and beauty; but when urged by the manager of a public Gallery to exhibit them, Evelyn still refused. 'We have quite a circus of her pictures here now,' De Morgan wrote cheerfully; 'they are all very Dr. Thorpey in ideas!' Meanwhile Mrs. Fleming, who had written many charming verses on the early paintings of both De Morgan and his wife, wrote again on this later work; and one little poem has survived destruction. It describes a picture entitled 'Love's Piping,' wherein Love, crowned with roses, sits piping on a rock over-hanging a stream, while above him, contrasting with his rosy wings, spreads a tree with a mass of delicate, snowy mayblossom. On the opposite bank, a maiden, blind-folded, wooed by the lure of his music, is stepping to destruction, while other maidens, garlanded with blossom, watch her peril callously.

[1] *The Old Man's Youth and the Young Man's Old Age*, published posthumously in 1921.

LOVE THE MISLEADER.

'Hearken my piping, and follow my piping,
The song that is new when the world is old;
Hither maiden, that goest a-maying
For Whitethorn silver and King-cup gold.

'Leave your flowers and leave your fellows,
Follow the song that is always sweet';
And the Maiden heard—for the distance mellows,
And followed the piping with fleet, fair feet.

Her eyes were holden—by Fate's decreeing,
For Love can see, though lovers are blind;
And down the valley, all, all unseeing
She followed the piping—a-far in the wind.

'Hither Maiden that goest a-maying!
Maids must answer when Love doth sing.
Find my place in the pleasant gloaming,
Follow me, follow me—westering!'

Love on a rock, with a stream below him,
Laughed at blind feet and groping hands;
Waters quench not—for those who know him,
They Love's Chosen—his sealéd bands.

Nymphs a-maying—but none to save her.
(They have suffered—they watch and smile.)
Stumbling feet and a pool to grave her;
And Love is piping and playing the while.

Earlier that same year, before his exodus from Florence, De Morgan had read a volume of reminiscences by his lifelong friend Henry Holiday, whom he correctly described as 'a singular example of a man of almost universal attainments.' On January 16, 1914, he wrote:—

'Pawling had already made me the possessor of a complete set of proofs, out of which I had taken a semi-circular bite all but as big as the sandwich. Evelyn did more. She read it from cover to cover, so far as one can do before a book is bound—and lamented when she came to the end—says it is the most readable book she has had for a month of Sundays.

'However, I have virtually read it all through in an irregular way that my poor old brain, overtaxed by writing, has reduced my reading to....

'I like your preface [advocating peace] enormously, being quite in sympathy with all parties that agree with the general sketch of the Nazarene Party, in the Borough of Galilee. Only I want people to go on constructing ironclads until their only sensitive organ, the pocket, feels it....

'It's very strange to read at this length of time such clear recollections of that old Welsh period—which a life full of troubles has since made misty. There have been seven deaths in my family since then, and though some have not been definitely tragic, there has been an element of Æschylean tragedy in the story.

'However, nothing comes near poor Simeon in tragedy.

'My wife sends you warm thanks for the book—but she envies you all you have seen. So do I. But there is a drawback to a lazy-bones like me. See how you have had to exert yourself....

'I wish all whose lives have been so full and varied as yours would follow your example. It would not overload the planet with autobiographies. Indeed, if I could think it a friendly act to apply to a friend

a line of poetry that won't parse, I would drag in "The man so various that he seemed to be, not one, but all mankind's epitome." '

But the momentary note of sorrow in this letter, conjured up by the vision of a happy past seen through the haze of years, was intensified when news came to him shortly afterwards of the death of Mrs. Morris, the friend of so many treasured recollections. 'How the visible and tangible world has shrunk (*quoad* friends) for me in the last few years!' he wrote sadly. 'Like Dr. Thorpe I have "done a good deal of surviving" and find it sorry work.' By and by when her daughter pleaded earnestly that he would give any assurance which lay in his power respecting his own belief in the tangibility of that other life to which the majority of mankind look forward with serene confidence, he wrote with the simple honesty which still scorned both subterfuge and self-deception.

William De Morgan to May Morris.

'VIALE MILTON,
'FLORENCE,
'*3rd Feb.*, 1914.

'MY DEAR MAY,—

'How I do wish I could write a word to put heart into an old friend—so old a friend!—face to face with Death. I grieve to have nothing to say, that I am at liberty to say, beyond that my own belief is fixed, that this life is an instalment of a larger and longer one.

'I know—or think—your inquiry to mean—"Has this belief been founded on mere reason, or on some confirmatory experience?" My answer is that some small experience I have had of apparent communication with folk on the other side *must* have had *some* weight in turning the scale so decidedly. But it may have been very small. I suspect that the lifelong faith of the strongest consecutive reasoner I ever knew—my father—had more to do with it than anything else.

'If the few things that I have met with, that have any value, could be told without involving others than myself, I would gladly write them to you. But they would amount to very little, all said and done. I don't think that from all my experience I could produce anything so much to the purpose as the incidents described in my father's preface to my mother's *From Matter to Spirit*, which you may have read. These incidents need to be read—to see their force—with a much closer attention than is commonly given to things in print.

'Perhaps we shall die and after all be none the wiser as to what Death means, and Life. But it does not recommend itself to my understanding. Intense curiosity, and a hope that this life is a dream we wake from, rather than Death a sleep we fall into—those are my mental conditions.'

Not long afterwards he was urged to make some definite pronouncement on the question of Psychical research, and especially whether his faith in 'immortalism' was at all due to a belief in Spiritualism; and he answered his correspondent guardedly:—

'After long observation of the way in which testimony on the subject referred to in your letter is generally received, I think it best to reserve whatever experiences I may have had personally, for the present certainly, possibly altogether.

'I think it will be evident that I should not have arrived at this decision unless these experiences had run counter to accepted popular conclusions.

'I may, however, say that I have never wished for the alteration of one word of the preface my father wrote to my mother's book *From Matter to Spirit*. Also that I was a personal witness of the instances of alleged communication from his relatives which he relates.'

'People,' he said privately, 'are settling slowly to accept the reality of these things, but the point is we get very little nearer the cause of them.' As in his early days, he still considered the subject *sub judice*, and his first and last pronouncement upon it is defined in the course of his argument in *Joseph Vance* respecting the Ghost in the Corpse.

'I expressed just now my mistrust of what is called Spiritualism (very absurdly, as it deprives us of a word the reverse of materialism. I want the word Spiritualist to describe myself, and can't use it because of Mrs. Guppy and the Davenport brothers).

'But I'm going to say a good word for even this sort of thing. I owe it a trifle for a message said to come from Voltaire's Ghost. It was asked: "Are you now convinced of another world?" and rapped out, "There *is* no other world—Death is only an incident in Life." He was a suggestive Ghost, at any rate.'

None the less, it is not surprising that two people temperamentally hypersensitive and impressionable should have had curious experiences in regard to supposed psychic phenomena and telepathy; indeed, the almost uncanny succession of coincidences connected with De Morgan's fiction sometimes found a counterpart in the development of his wife's art.

On one occasion Mrs. Pickering was anxious to give a present to her brother, Sir Walter Spencer-Stanhope, and commissioned Evelyn to paint a large picture for this purpose, the subject to be chosen by its future recipient. Sir Walter, however, declared himself unable to think of anything suitable, and finally, as Evelyn sat drawing in her studio in London one evening, it flashed across her that she would like to paint a picture from the text, '*Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*' So clearly did she visualize the design that she drew it forthwith.

The following morning brought a letter from her uncle in Yorkshire: 'I have at last thought of a subject I should like painted,' he wrote; and to her astonishment he suggested the text for which she had drawn the cartoon apparently at the very hour at which he was writing to her!

Certain incidents, however, which occurred to both De Morgan and his wife seem suggestive of the erratic pranks of a poltergeist.

One evening when they were having some friends to dinner at their flat in Florence, the conversation turned on the subject of Spiritualism. All present related their experiences save one lady who, while helping herself from a dish of rissoles, which she pronounced to be excellent, declared in the same breath

that she would never believe in the supernatural unless some event, however trivial, came under her notice which could be explained by no rational interpretation.

After dinner the conversation drifted to other topics, and by and by, as the guests were departing, De Morgan went with them out into the hall where he had hung up their coats and cloaks upon some pegs which were placed so high that the other members of the party who had not the advantage of his height could not reach them. As he lifted down the cloak of the lady who had proclaimed her scepticism, suddenly from its hood, in the view of all present, there shot out an article which hit her upon the nose and then fell to the floor. Considerably startled, everyone began to search for the mysterious object which, since it had seemed alive, De Morgan momentarily concluded to be what he termed 'a mouse with Alpine proclivities.' It was, however, soon discovered that the lively object was a *rissole*—now ice-cold—one which had apparently come from the dish of which the lady had been partaking when she had announced her disbelief in the supernatural!

The incident, for all its appearance of a practical joke, remained to De Morgan inexplicable. During the entire evening none of those present had been out into the hall; the only other people in the flat were the Italian *chef*, who had never left the kitchen, and his wife who had waited at table. The latter was extremely short and could not have reached the cloak; both were preternaturally solemn and incapable of an unseemly jest; neither understood a word of English. Moreover, the fact remained that the rissole had *not fallen* from its hiding place, but *had leapt*!

On another occasion an incident happened which seemed full of ominous import. Evelyn, walking along Kensington High Street one afternoon, when nearly opposite the station, distinctly heard her husband's voice call 'Yoicks'—a word by which they were in the habit of hailing each other. She turned round, startled, expecting to see him; but he was nowhere in sight. Yet so vivid was the impression that, although she had an engagement in the opposite direction, she returned home, feeling perturbed lest anything had happened to him. He, however, was not in the house; but later in the afternoon he appeared, likewise looking distressed and anxious. 'I want to know,' he questioned at once, 'were you in the neighbourhood of High Street Station this afternoon?' 'Yes,' she replied, full of curiosity; 'why do you ask?' 'Because I was bicycling past the station, and I distinctly heard you call "Yoicks!" I got off my bicycle and looked for you everywhere, but I could not see you.' 'What time was that?' asked Evelyn. 'Six o'clock.' 'And *I* went past the station at four, and heard

you call!' she replied. As an instance of possible telepathy the episode was curious; in its absence of sequel it remained pointless.

It will be remembered that De Morgan had noticed that a particular type of dream came to him with unfailing regularity before a death took place in his family—a dream of his early home in Camden Street, entirely unremarkable save that throughout his life its recurrence proved the inevitable precursor of some bereavement. One night he dreamed it with extreme vividness, but no ill-tidings followed, and he had forgotten the occurrence when, some weeks later, he learnt that, at the date when he had been visited by the dream, his brother Edward had been killed by a fall from his horse in South Africa. On another occasion the dream came to him indistinctly, and, after a similar lapse of time, he heard of the death in Africa of the infant son of that same brother.

De Morgan often referred facetiously to the curious succession of coincidences in matters great and small which seemed to dog all that he did. 'I am writing to you,' he says in one letter to Heinemann, 'not because I have a single thing to say, but because I am wanting to hear from you! Every time I write to you, with the regularity of a clock-tick, a letter arrives from you by the next post. And you see our letters can't cross without yours having something to cross. *Post hoc, propter hoc.*'

But apart from ludicrous or trivial occurrences, De Morgan and his wife had an experience of which they never spoke to the outer world, and respecting which their reticence is easily comprehensible, since they both felt strongly that in dealing with any phenomena apparently inexplicable on materialistic grounds, not only caution but reverence was requisite. They both recognized very clearly that the majority of such investigations in Spiritualism were productive of two evils—an incitement to fraud to prey on credulity, and the danger of a loss of mental balance in the participators. Still more they appreciated the fact that all deductions from such experiments must remain largely theoretical, and that the phenomena investigated are open to more than one interpretation. On the other hand, they felt that if any substratum of truth underlay the seeming triviality of much of these phenomena, they did not wish lightly to expose what was sacred to the sneers of the prejudiced.

This being so, they determined to prosecute their experiment without bias, simply and privately; they decided that each evening they would set apart a quiet time after dinner for the development of automatic writing; and that they would admit no friends to take part in it, or to share their confidence. Owing to the retired life they then led, they were able to pursue this plan with very few breaks in its continuity; they sat with no other apparatus than a pencil and a sheet of paper, while

one placed a hand upon the wrist of the other. At first little or no result was arrived at. When the pencil moved, it wandered aimlessly over the paper, describing meaningless gyrations. By and by, words appeared, incessantly repeated; then broken sentences, but so disjointed and senseless that often they felt disposed to give up the attempt. After many months of patient perseverance, however, the writing assumed a different form. 'Angels' professed to write—occasionally interrupted by their prototypes—and a definite course of teaching was instituted by what purported to be the glorified Spirit of a man who, when on earth, had been a wretched leper. In this fashion they got a mass of correspondence, most of it curious, some of it of singular and lofty beauty, all of it totally different from the usual inanities procured under like conditions. It is an interesting question how far the conjunction of two rare minds, acting in complete harmony, sufficed to produce a rare development; but to the self-constituted mediums it seemed that an influence external to their consciousness evolved every phrase. Moreover, two things were curious about the experiment. While they wrote, the sense of a word which they were transcribing might occasionally become apparent to them, but the meaning of what they were transcribing—the gist of an entire sentence, far more, an entire paragraph—was totally unintelligible to them until they were able to read it as a whole. Still more, the writing itself varied in a fashion which they could not influence, what purported to be different 'controls' on each occasion producing entirely different autographs.

After a time the experiment was abandoned, principally because its outcome latterly consisted of a repetition of the first letters produced; but the beautiful ideas suggested by these communications made a deep impression on both writers, possibly all the more that these were a reflex of their own mentality. For the *motif* dominant in all these 'letters' likewise permeates De Morgan's fiction; the belief that this life is but one phase of a great whole, one stage in a continuous progression, and that the growth of a soul is the greatest good; while the same message Evelyn passed on to the world in glowing colours and fair fancies. In most of her later pictures can be traced that paramount idea of struggle and of growth, the battle for attainment to a rarer atmosphere, a finer development; and her work is penetrated with a wealth of spiritual insight apparent to those whose minds are atune to interpret it. One picture especially may be cited in this connexion.

In 'The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence,' within a small space of canvas is depicted the gradual evolution of a developing soul. At the base are seen the grey, sad forms of the spiritually damned—those who dwell mentally in outer darkness.

Next are depicted their first painful steps upwards towards the light which, as yet, cannot be discerned by them, even though a faint flush from that far-away glory is already dyeing their drab-hued garments. Then, gradually, as they struggle upwards by slow, arduous degrees, the colour intensifies; their darkened gaze is directed towards the heavens—not, as previously, earthwards; till, by and by, when they have risen higher, the chains fall from their fettered limbs, the bandages from their blinded eyes, and there bursts upon each emancipated spirit the gladness and the music of the spheres.

Many other of her works, however, might be instanced as expressing variations of the same idea of spiritual stagnation and blindness, or the stress and agony of self-realization and development. In 'A Soul in Hell,' we see the picture of a man who, 'surrounded by everything that is beautiful and desirable, yet, by the force of his own dark spirit, dwells in a Hell of his own making.' In another picture entitled 'The Captives' is depicted a cave, hung with age-old stalactites, wherein are imprisoned female captives, clothed in rainbow tints, but terrorized by shadowy dragons, phantasms of their own creation. Another large canvas entitled 'Realities' tells its tale more forcibly and with painful emphasis.

Four female figures are seated upon the shore, while about them hover bat-like larvæ of evil appearance. The women are depicted fair of form, graceful of pose, and clad in draperies so exquisite and exhibiting such lovely gradations of colour that this vivid beauty accentuates to a point of horror the contrasting ugliness of their features. For their faces are the faces of those spiritually—even mentally—deficient, sodden with the crass stupidity of a mind dead to higher things. And as they sit there, deaf and blind to the glory of the spheres, above them—*close to them*—in the translucent ether are floating a bevy of angelic forms, radiant in celestial light, song breathing from their joyous lips, bliss expressed in their glancing wings, their airy flight, their lovely faces. Yet not every one read the interpretation aright.

'I suppose,' said a visitor one day, 'these'—pointing to the angelic vision—'are the Dreams; and the lower figures—the sadness, the sordidness, and the misery clothed in beauty which is a mockery—*those* are the "Realities" of Life?'

'I see differently,' said Evelyn De Morgan.

And in a little notebook De Morgan likewise pencilled this sentence: 'The things we count real are dreams, and the realities are all a-head.'

In yet another picture, 'The Valley of Shadows,' previously referred to, a different aspect of the same belief is expressed. It may be held to be imaged thus in the automatic script.

You are in the Valley of Shadows, but you know it, hence the light by which I write and the words that echo in your brain. . . . These Shadows are big and ominous. They are hight misery and disease, poverty and despondency. But they are Shadows to be followed by the phantom shapes of success and wealthy ease. All are Shadows.

Outside in the clear vault of Heaven, under the burning sky of Truth, they have no existence . . . the faint dying shout of Devils is lost in the swelling music of the spheres. . . .

To give isolated examples, however, of the writings which coincided with many of the ideas expressed in both pictures and novels would be misleading without the context; yet a few paragraphs in relation to Art may be quoted as being obviously in unison with the mentality of those who transcribed them.

'You are not to think that the only reason for doing Art is to make life beautiful. The ugliness in modern life is a blindness to existing things most necessary to the growth of the human soul. I think the best thing to strive for is the realization that Art should be Harmony. The second thing to grasp is that Harmony is the creative force, and Discord the power of dissolution. Out of Harmony comes growth. Out of Discord, Death and destruction. In life on Earth growth is slain by Discord, and Harmony leads to fruition. . . . Now I see clear, and Life is a most glorious thing and Death but a phantom.

* * * * *

'The spiritual can only be seen by Spirit, and the reason Art is of vital importance in the scheme of Life is that it depends for its very existence on certain spiritual laws not known on Earth, only guessed at. Now to understand this, two things are required: intense faith and great simplicity of character. The faith is needed to grasp the dimness of the unseen, and the simplicity is needed in order that the veil of matter should not destroy by its complexity the chance of the inner Vision to see things clearly not of your earth. Art is entirely of the Spirit. Only as the Spirit grows does it become possible.

* * * * *

'It is the best thing on earth, that incessant struggle. . . . Art is more important than you think. But it must be earnest, grim life-earnestness that has no tincture of gain in it, or love of earth-fame: only the strength of one's arm, and the whole power of one's being are to be given to it; and to look neither to the right nor to the left, but go straight on doing the best that is in one.'

* * * * *

'Art is hard, and the flesh is a burden and many are swept back by the flood of adverse criticism. It is best to do as you do, to work in the shade till you catch the distant echo of the music you must repeat to others; to shun the public with its ever-vacant stare, to hide your innermost thoughts from view till they grow and become strong. Continue. Farewell!'

Interspersed throughout the writings, however, were certain passages that seem to recur with a frequency which, in the sad days that were approaching, must surely have been recalled to the thoughts of one of the writers:—

'You are almost among the Spirits, but still the Flesh is there. You are not long for this world. . . . The Spirit is bright, but the frame wears thin. . . . When you come, pray, pray to get free together, for Happiness cannot be for one without the other.'

THE WORSHIP OF MAMMON
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT
[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

CHAPTER XVI

THE YOUNG MAN'S OLD AGE

1914–1917

IN July, 1914, De Morgan, seated at the 'table with the queer feet' at which his father had been wont to write, with quiet amusement re-enacted the rôle which his readers loved to assign to him, that of the 'benevolent old gentleman,' exponent of 'early Victorianism,' a survival from a world old-fashioned beyond belief, yet with certain redeeming features to set against its obvious absurdities. Tranquilly he wrote :—

'I believe that Youth can never image the youth of its grandsires, can never really think of its grandmothers as—to put it plainly—kissable. Of course, says Youth, these old fogies had a kind of working juvenility to justify the fewness of their years; but that was their old-fashioned humbug. They were overshadowed all the time by the future-perfect tense, and the gloom of their senility to come was retrospective. Look at the pictures of them! Read their fiction—their poems! Old fogies from the beginning, incurable! That is what *they* were, while, on the other hand, We are up to date. . . .

Dear boy—dear girl—you are quite mistaken! You have no intrinsic newness others have not had before, each in his turn and hers. Fogeydom of old was Modern too in its day, and Bucks and Dandies were once the Last Thing Out; even as Nuts, I believe now are. I, vanishing at last, look back forgivingly, almost lovingly to the vacuous fatuities of my days of vacuum; the then-new slang that made my father sick; the area of incorrigible crinolines; the Piccadilly streamers of the swells, and their Noah's Ark coats. And *they* have grown to be bywords of scorn to you. . . .'

Then, into the midst of that tranquil, leisurely fiction, came news which startled him. On August 1, writing to his friend, Mr. Scott-Moncrieff, he closed his letter with the following sentence: *'I have just read that a Declaration of War has been made that may make our precious Civilization a chaos!'* On August 2 he added: 'I suppose all the ingenuous Arts will have to take a back seat now till the cloud clears. Nevertheless the pen that writes this is scribbling fiction as ever. One is incorrigible!'

Two days later, England joined in the struggle; and the full tide of carnage poured relentlessly over Europe.

'What a hideous time this is!' wrote De Morgan in the October following, to the same correspondent. 'Shall we ever be at peace again? I am sick of it, and only feel if I could kill two junkers, I should die content! I wonder if any pacifist ever made an oration on the top of a reinforced concrete block made in Peace-time to bombard London. Really, Germany *is* the Devil!'

That same month he wrote to Professor Phelps:—

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA, S.W.,
'*Oct.* 26, 1914.

'MY DEAR PROF. PHELPS,—

'I have received your book and am glad to see it, and grateful. It is a pleasure to look forward to when the light breaks—at present one cannot read or write for the guns. Not that one hears them here, except metaphorically. But they are audible at Ramsgate.

'I am sorry to say that I am barbarous by nature and catch myself gloating over slaughter—slaughter of Germans, of course! Half of these men I should have liked—a tenth of these men I should have loved. It is sickening—but . . .

'A friend has just left me who maintains that the Germans never do anything that is not in strict accordance with international law. Then a devil may break loose, and yet comply with international law!

'Good forecasts—good for us—are in the air to-night! I hope—but have done some hoping to no purpose latterly.

'However, the last rumour I heard professed to come direct from Sir John French.

'We have left Florence altogether, so you will find our nest tenanted by other birds if you go there. I feel as if the world were ending up, to the sound of melinite! And yet, as Browning wrote, "God never says one word."

'Our very best regards to yourselves.

'Yours ever,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

As the cloud darkened, and there followed days of anxiety, privation and increasing danger, the inventive faculties of both De Morgan and his wife reflected prevalent conditions. To imaginative minds, the horror was intensified, fancy spared them no measure of its realization. Up in her studio Evelyn painted a series of pictures in which subjects relating to war-time were treated in symbolic guise; while De Morgan sat in his study below with his power of writing paralysed and his thoughts wandering to other matters. The following autumn he was writing to Mr. Scott-Moncrieff:—

'CHURCH STREET,
'9. 12. 15.

'That's a lovely sonnet of yours: "When all alone! etc." I rejoice that you keep in such good Shakespearean form. I try to write, but fail—the only work I take to is devising new means of Hun-baffling. The worst of the whole of it is that there's no help for it—we must have it out now, or have it again in a few years. I think of the small boys and girls I see—what is the world to be for them?

'I am told that the novel trade has a certain briskness—people want something to take their minds off the war. What I am writing doesn't take the author's off.

'I hear some strange stories about coming development in aircraft. We have not had any lightning *here* following raids.

'Can you, or any of yours, tell me a thing I want to know? Can an aeroplane fly a kite without danger to its stability? No one can tell me anything from experience.

'Loves from both to all—and hopes for better things.'

In spite of adverse conditions and many distractions, De Morgan was still struggling to continue two novels upon which he had been engaged before the outbreak of hostilities. Just as an artist will turn from one picture to another and find his power of perception thus quickened, so De Morgan had always found that he could turn without any confusion of mind from one plot to another, and that the transition of ideas actually aided self-criticism. One of the books upon which he was thus working was entitled *The Old Mad House*; the other, from which quotations have already been made, he intended should embody many of his personal recollections of Chelsea in a bygone time; and, as already explained, he had laid part of the scene of this latter story in his former home, the vanished Vale.

The origin of the title decided upon for this book was curious. One day De Morgan and his wife had gone down into the country, where, as they were walking along a lonely lane, they saw a boy approaching. 'I shall ask this boy to give me a title for my new book!' said De Morgan on a sudden impulse. Accordingly he stopped the lad, and after a few preliminary remarks, he said, 'Now, I want to ask you a funny question. I am a writer, and I want a name for my next book. If you were writing a story, what should you call it?' The lad reflected for a moment, and then said, 'I should call it *The Old Man's Youth and the Young Man's Old Age.*' 'What an incredible answer!' commented De Morgan as he walked on. 'Who would have thought of getting such a title out of an ordinary country yokel!'

It will be remembered that his first intention in writing *Joseph Vance* had been that it should be the life-story of a poor old man dying in the Workhouse Infirmary; and although the original *motif* had afterwards been abandoned, in this later novel De Morgan reverted to it, so that in his thoughts the tragedy of the *Young Man's Old Age* ran like a sombre thread throughout the narrative of *The Old Man's Youth*. Like *Joseph Vance* the story was told in the form of an autobiography, and in order to identify himself more closely with the conditions he was describing, De Morgan depicted the narrator as a man who had been ruined, as he himself had, in a measure, been

ruined, by an early adherence to Art. Thus it befell that the first novel written by De Morgan and the last were drawn from the same inspiration and written in the same vein.

In pursuance of his idea, De Morgan paid many visits to the Chelsea Infirmary, where he studied the inmates and their surroundings, and made many devoted friends among the old paupers, who learnt to look eagerly for his kindly conversation and the little presents which he invariably brought them. In like manner he had long been known and adored by the small Lizeranns and Michael Ragstoars of Chelsea. At a particular hour in the evening when he knew that the children would be gathered wistfully round the doors of a cinema near by, he would wend his way thither, and after engaging them in a lively or a confidential talk, he would distribute a shower of pennies which enabled them to enter the longed-for precincts of the theatre. Indeed, his progress through the streets of Chelsea was incessantly interrupted to chat with some of his endless friends of all ranks and all ages in the locality; and as he talked, his retentive brain was still storing up impressions for use in the many novels which he contemplated writing. 'When a man arrives at my time of life,' he said one day, 'there is one question of paramount importance—the date of one's death. I feel more and more anxious to get all the definite book-scribbling done that I can do. It would be a great sell to have my materials outlast me! I would sooner use them all up.' Meanwhile he looked forward with unshaken confidence to the time when Victory should crown the efforts of the Allies. 'This war is an outbreak of diabolism which will pass,' he would say; and one day he added quizzically, 'If only I had been translated into German, it would have prevented all this—*what* a pity!'

He soon fell placidly into line with the unusual economic conditions, and it became a familiar sight to see his tall, slim figure hurrying briskly on a daily round among the provision shops in order to bespeak the small allowance of food available under the scheme of rationing then in force 'You met him in the morning,' related Mrs. Ady, 'doing his marketing and carrying provisions home; and late in the dusk of the evening he was constantly to be seen setting out on a rapid walk along the Embankment. Often you caught sight of him stopping at a street corner in earnest conversation with a soldier in khaki just back from the front. The tall figure was slightly bowed with advancing years, and Time had whitened the locks and beard that were once a rich brown; but the brisk, alert step and clear blue eyes with their frank kindly glance were still the same as ever.'

As winter swept over the land—a winter of darkened streets,

of air-raids, and scanty food—his thoughts sometimes turned longingly to peaceful days in the past spent in the bright climate of Italy. He would recall the happy week-ends at Villa Nuti, when his friend Spencer-Stanhope was still alive, and the walks up to Bellosquardo, when, as he and his wife climbed higher and higher, they watched the blood-red sunsets behind Monte Morello, or, later in the spring, the Val d'Arno smiling in the first flush of April loveliness. One bleak winter's day towards dusk Mrs. Ady relates how she encountered him as they were both passing a new Roman Catholic church which had been built of recent years in Cheyne Row. The door stood open, and in the red glow within, they saw the priest reciting the office of Benediction, the clouds of incense rising heavenwards, and the gleam of silver and lighted candles showing brightly upon the altar. 'Ah,' exclaimed De Morgan, his thoughts reverting to Florence, 'I like that! It makes me feel I am at home again!' Then it flashed across him that this church stood on the exact spot where his first pottery kiln had been set up in the garden of Orange House; and, with a little laugh, he added: 'How odd I should have said that—of course, it really was my home!'

Forgetful of the date, in November, 1915, De Morgan passed the anniversary of his seventy-sixth birthday; and a little characteristic *jeu-d'esprit* connected with this may be mentioned. The present writer had written a book entitled *A Painter of Dreams* which, amongst other articles, contained a short life of Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, and which was dedicated to De Morgan in the following terms:—

'To the author of *When Ghost Meets Ghost* and many other delightful works.

A token of homage
from
A writer of facts
to
A writer of fiction.

'I write of the Ghosts I hear of,
You write of the Ghosts you see;
But never beneath our busy pens
Or the fertile scope of our magic lens,
Doth mingle that Company!

'Each apart in our land of Phantoms—
The Dead, or the Never-have-been,
We follow a lilting measure,
We struggle for truth or for treasure,
Unreal as a Painted Dream.

'So I fathom a world extinguished;
You fashion a mimic host;
We live in a separate Dreamland
Where never can Ghost meet Ghost!'

The morning after his receipt of this book brought the following letter from De Morgan :—

'Diana dear, upon my word
It's really only just occurred
To one who must be reckoned yaw
Most absent-minded brother-in-law,
That extra gratitude is due
On this account from him to you ;—
The book you gave him just this minute—
(Not a dull page, I warrant, in it !)
Is of all gifts the gift most pleasant—
An unexpected birthday present !
For Time still plays " his usual tricks "
And this day I am seventy-six !

'Only—and this was just like me !
The fact had slipped my memory.
The old chap's scythe clears tracts on tracts
And mows down unimportant facts.
One trifle of his vivisection
Has been my power of recollection.

'My Ego doesn't care a damn—
Take note of this—how old I am !

The reply.

'Your verses written to Diana
Have pleased her both in mood and manner ;
Despite their reference to your age,
She's stuck them on her title-page,
And feels that all her labour past
Is really valuable at last !

'But one thing strikes her very droll ;
You have a wife—your life—your soul,
Yet, while the years are swiftly fleeting,
Nor birthday gift—nor birthday greeting
Checks off the flight of days so fair
Between so chaste—so fond a pair !

'Tho' Time may play his tricks with you,
This should not be where one is two.
(If one of *us* pursued this course,
We'd think it grounds for a divorce ;)
Your spouse (most peerless of all ladies)
Should quickly be consigned to Hades.

'All that remains for me to say
Is—" happy returns " of yesterday ;
Nor can I thus conclude my letter—
Of years *de-More-gone*—well—de better !'

Despite the prevailing horror which was eating into his heart and life, De Morgan's old sense of fun would not be repressed. 'I am not responsible for the following verses,' he wrote to a friend, 'but they so exactly describe my present

state of mind and body, I feel as if I had written them!' and he quoted:—

'My Tuesdays are meatless,
My Wednesdays are wheatless,
I am getting more eatless each day;
My home it is heatless,
My bed it is sheetless,
They're all sent to the Y.M.C.A.
The bar rooms are treatless,
My coffee is sweetless,
Each day I get poorer and wiser;
My stockings are feetless,
My trousers are seatless:
My! How I do hate the Kaiser!'

'One day, early in the war,' relates Miss Holiday, 'I had made an appointment to call for Mr. De Morgan and to walk with him to the studio in Edith Grove where Evelyn was housing the beautiful pictures she had brought over from Italy. Unfortunately I paid another visit *en route* where my hostess talked and talked and talked about the war without a single pause, and my heart sank lower and lower as the hands of the clock moved round, and I could seize no opportunity to leave. When at length I reached Church Street I explained the cause of my unpunctuality. "Well, you know," said De Morgan, "what one wants with people like that is an electric bell; *they* talk and *you* wait just so long, and then you push down a button in the middle of a sentence, like a chairman at a meeting, and then they have to stop; and then you get up and run away!'

'We walked on to the studio, none the less discussing the one topic which occupied all our thoughts; and I remarked on a horrible description in that day's papers of the way in which the Germans tied the bodies of their dead in bundles and stacked them upright in railway trucks for removal. "They are so dreadfully tidy!" he commented.' Yet although he obviously disliked speaking of the horrors which were being enacted, and usually tried to give another bend to any conversation which tended in that direction, he brooded continually upon the awful blight which had stricken humanity. In a little notebook in which fleeting thoughts and scraps of dialogue were jotted down roughly by him for possible use in future books, there are also a number of pencilled couplets and longer verses which, though unfinished, and obviously regarded by him as a mere vent to his feelings, intended for no eye but his own, yet serve to reflect the trend of his mood at this date. Selection is difficult, and the following fragments are quoted somewhat at random:—

'Crush or be crushed! What would his profit be
Who lived to be the thrall of this aggressor?
This Lord of all the World—his conscience free
As each man's is, who is his own Confessor.

'Who flings his solemn pledges in the dust,
Whose plea for his dishonour all unmeet is—
His all-sufficient plea—"*What must be must*
When drives the Devil!—To the wind with Treaties!"

'Who vaunts his God, to justify his sin—
His pigmy God, of his imagination—
His God of Battles that he means to win
And must, perforce, if he would rule creation.
* * * * *

'Uproot your foe—annihilate his guns—
With such as he all talk of Peace is vapour.
Whatever Peace is made with modern Huns
That Peace will only be a piece of paper.'

'"War is War," said the submarine
To the merchant-skipper whose boat was filling.
"I have kept the Kaiser's conscience clean
Though I sink your boat, I abstain from killing.

'"None can say that the fault is mine;
Blame my foes, who yonder shores own.
You are well aware you have crossed the line
On the Kaiser's map, that bounds his War-Zone."

'Who shall oppose the maxims trite
Of old sea-law to a Teuton thesis—
Or dispute a German War-Lord's right
To do whatever he damn well pleases?

'"You're very good," said the Skipper, "I'm sure;
Your view of the case most apt and terse is.
I quite perceive that War is War,
And appreciate your tender mercies.

'"And, further consolation find,
That shot is shot, and shell is shell.
It's just as well to bear in mind,
That God is God, and Hell is Hell."'

Another poem, too long for adequate transcription, pleads that the ruins of Rheims Cathedral should be left untouched, 'a heritage for Time,' since—

'. . . No spurious birth
Of false renewal can restore the spell
Was theirs but yesterday. . . .'

and he addresses the 'insolent Hohenzollern':—

'One day shall rise to execrate thy power,
Even from thy native soil, no longer dumb,
A thousand curses in the passing hour—
A thousand thousand in the years to come.

'Woe for those years to come! Where is thy gain
Wild Teuton beast, well baffled of thy prize?
On that audacious brow the brand of Cain,
In that false heart the worm that never dies!

'But for these ruins—their unspoken speech,
Their very silence, registers thy deed—
Records thy shame—is eloquent to teach
As taught the Nazarene of old. What need

'To supersede his teaching? Shall his plea
For Peace on Earth remain an idle breath?
A ripple on the shores of Galilee?
A murmur through the palms of Nazareth?'

Other verses, in disjointed couplets, were evidently also part of a long poem, but can now only be pieced together by guesswork in a fashion perhaps little indicative of the original intention of the writer.

'Culture comes! Let no man fail
To render homage. Shout—All hail!
Heralded by jargon rank,
With taint of quack and mountebank,
Her High Pontiff Terrorism
Rules a Church without a schism,
On whose altar hell-fire burns,
Cant and blasphemy by turns . . .
Musical with shot and shell,
All the symphonies of Hell . . .
A Kaiser for apostle crying
In a wilderness of lying . . .
Blare of trumpets—roll of drums
Pan-Germanic Culture comes!

. . . . . .

'Culture goes. And plundered marts,
Ruined homesteads, broken hearts,
Girlhood blasted, slaughter, wrack,
Desolation—mark her track.
Here the embers of a town,
There the cross she trampled down.
That small thing a baby's corse is!
That's a woman's—that's a horse's!
Food for starving dog and cat!
A father this—a mother that
Her babe's experience of earth
A bayonet before its birth.
That carrion flung beside the way
And this—were lovers yesterday.
By these things I understand
Culture has swept across the land.'

To Professor Phelps De Morgan wrote in the following December:—

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA,
'*Dec. 20th*, 1915,

'I have just received from the Authors' Clipping Co. the *Boston Weekly Herald* of 28th ult. in which you appear retailed by an appreciative interviewer. I always feel that I should agree with you about the books you

criticize. So when I am asked for an opinion of a work I haven't read, yours is one I am very apt to repeat. I know you are a safe man.

'I have more often not read than read any book—I find I can't fix my attention closely enough on any modern novelist to find out what he means. It may be because I am really a fossil—a survival of a brain in a Neanderthal skull, that is allowed to write what he omitted to write forty years ago—and that I can't enter into modern ideas. Or it may be, more likely, that I am, as I always think Haydn's Gipsy Rondo says, "jolly sick and tired of the whole turn out!" and can't concentrate. I can't read a vivid description—it calls for such a tremendous effort of the imagination to "realize" it, as they say nowadays. Whenever I read a newspaper column I wonder how soon the writer will say that somebody doesn't "realize"—or whether he will first "point out"—like B'rer Rabbit. But that's neither here nor there!

'I put aside my long novel,[1] because with Kultur in full swing I felt I should spoil it. I took up an old beginning—sketched in immediately after *Joe Vance*—and have got about half-way through, with great difficulty. The trail of the poison gas is over us all here, and I can only get poor comfort from thinking what a many submarines we have made permanently so. All the same, one of my favourite employments is thinking how to add to their number—a grisly committee—coffins full of men very like our own. For all seamen are noble, because they live face to face with Death.

'I won't twaddle on to a second sheet, but will be content to say how glad I am to know you are still going strong, and to send you cordial good wishes for the current new year and Xmas. My wife joins me in all kind remembrances to you and yours.

'Always yours,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

With unfailing generosity De Morgan contributed to war-time charities, while his pen worked nimbly in constant propaganda designed to promote a better comprehension, both at home and abroad, of the cause in which England was ungrudgingly expending blood and gold. But when he was asked to send a large consignment of his books to many of the hospitals, he agreed only on the condition that other authors joined in the undertaking—'Otherwise,' he explained, 'it would look so bumptious!' This impression was perhaps confirmed by a letter from Mrs. Mackail describing the effect of such a gift to a non-military hospital.

Margaret Mackail to Evelyn De Morgan.

'Thanks for the hospital. Once on my rounds there I approached the bed of a man with a bundle of books in my arms and asked him if he would like one. He answered, "Thank you, I am very well acquainted with literature, and have no need of books."

'I then addressed myself to conversation, and said, rather foolishly, that I always felt sorry for the men being cut off their tobacco while in hospital, for it passed the time. His reply was in these Bible words which impressed themselves for ever on an otherwise not retentive memory:—

[1] *The Old Man's Youth and the Young Man's Old Age.*

STUDY IN CHALK FOR THE MOONBEAMS DIPPING INTO THE SEA
EVELYN DE MORGAN PINXIT
[In the possession of Mrs. Stirling.

'"Thank you, I have my passions and appetites so completely under control that it is a matter of indifference to me of what pleasure I am deprived."

'So then I went on to the next bed hoping that it would be a long time before he got well enough to leave, so that his wife might have a real holiday from him.

'So you see what an excellent hospital it is.'

Evelyn likewise agreed to have an exhibition in her studio of the series of symbolic 'War-pictures' on which she had been engaged; and although at this exhibition none of her work was for sale, and the money was procured by entrance fees only, she thus secured a considerable sum for the English and Italian Red Cross charities. Among many letters subsequently received by her was the following from an artist, then in his eighty-fifth year, the senior member of the International Peace Bureau.[1]

Felix Moscheles to Evelyn De Morgan.

'The Grelix,
'80 Elm Park Road, S.W.

'Dear Mrs. De Morgan,—

'I came—I saw—and *you* conquered! Once more I was fully impressed by the loftiness of your conceptions which pervade all your work, and by the masterly execution which enables you to give concrete form to your abstract ideals. Your drawing severely discards the non-essential and your colours are merged like those of the rainbow that promises peace and harmonies. Recalling your pictures I seem to hear your triumphant Angels singing Hallelujah! as they repulse my well-hated enemy, the Demon of War. *Thanks!* More verbally.

'Most sincerely Yrs.,
'Felix Moscheles.

'March 20—1916.'

As the Great Powers closed in a yet tighter death-grip, while thrones and nationalities rocked with the clash of arms and toppled to their ruin, De Morgan became more and more obsessed with the nightmare of the fray. He could no longer pursue his peaceful, leisurely fiction. 'I find I can't write worth a cent,' he remarked sadly to his cousin Walter De Morgan; 'German Culture has shadowed everything—my mind included. This hideous war has knocked me silly, and I can think of nothing but how to tackle submarines—that is the great problem nowadays. If they can't be squashed, civilization may go to the wall.' To an American author, Mr. Williams, who sent him a copy of his first novel, he explained:—

[1] This Bureau used to be the standing committee of all the Peace Societies of the world. Felix Moscheles, in honour of whose birth Felix Mendelssohn composed his 'Cradle Song,' was also for many years President of the International Arbitration Association.

'127 CHURCH STREET,
'CHELSEA, S.W.,
'4 *June*, 1916.

'I have received your book, and thank you most cordially for sending it to me. But I am afraid it must wait a while for me to have any chance of reading it with any enjoyment. Many books are waiting for me to recover some power of fixing my attention on a page of print. It is literally true that I have lost all power of following a story, however consecutively it may be written. I trace this partly to writing overmuch myself, at too advanced an age; partly to the constant wear and tear of nerves from the terrible strife of the times. Until we may say again *cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi*, the arts and literature must take a back seat.

'But thank you again for sending it to me. I hope History and Sanity may shake hands, and allow me to complete a book of my own, and to read some one else's.

Very truly yours,
'WM. DE MORGAN.'

To Mr. Ellis at this date he also observed:—

'23*rd June*, 1916.

'I find the only time I succeed in writing is the afternoon; as the day's work is liable to be spoilt if I go out late, the conjunction of circumstances practically keeps me from going out, at least until I see my way to the end. . . . The war has paralysed my inventive powers, or such as are left of them *and I can't get ahead*.

'We may see better days soon—let us hope for them!'

'*Nov.* 18*th*, 1916.

'You are quite right in saying I never go out—I don't and shan't till the Allies are in Berlin—I may go then, as things seem now! I was 77 two days ago!!!'

To his cousin, Walter De Morgan, he wrote again that same year:—

'I try to write but don't succeed. How can one do anything with the world as it is?

'I am interesting myself more and more in Aircraft, Submarines, Torpedoes, etc. If I was a millionaire I should have a thousand experiments going on.

'Have you ever seen a real torpedo? What is his nose like—pointed or capped? I have seen pictures of both. Perhaps one was his war-nose, and the other for common use.

'Better luck to us all next century!'

As his power of concentration upon literary work diminished, his old love of scientific experiment revived. The prosecution of modern warfare under novel conditions had roused all his former enthusiasm for scientific research; and every possible means for circumventing attacks from the enemy absorbed his attention. A great part of his time was now devoted to making experiments at the Polytechnic, where he approached each problem with the enthusiasm of a boy; and many were the carefully worked-out schemes and inventions which he sent up to the War Office or to the Board of Admiralty, most of these showing a knowledge

of technical detail as minute as though he had devoted a lifetime to their elucidation. 'Thus,' wrote his wife regretfully, later, 'much valuable time was stolen from literature.' Moreover, as in his youth, his zeal soon outsped his discretion; and on one occasion when a public room had been lent to him for the purpose of prosecuting an experiment, he successfully achieved an explosion which blew out all the windows; after which it was politely intimated to him that his presence would, in future, be dispensed with.

'Innocently expecting the hydrogen to burn like a Christian, with a lambent flame, scarcely visible by daylight,' [he explained when referring to this incident], 'we put a match to the hydrogen bottle. It busted with a loud report and blew out a lot of glass. . . . Mr. Skinner, the Principal at the Polytechnic, tells me that Dewar made a lot of experiments on the knack hydrogen has of escaping. Really, Jack Sheppard and Montecristo are not in it!'

Despite this misadventure, however, he still wrote triumphantly: 'I have got no end of inventions afoot, though I am not absolutely certain of any but one—a new airship. So I shall only push that one.' It is sad to reflect that it was this very enthusiasm which brought to pass the final tragedy. 'Things seldom happen to me quite as they happen to other folk,' he said once; and even Death came to him in unusual guise.

The story must be told from a personal standpoint.

There are days in life which remain for ever after stamped on the memory with a vividness out of all proportion to their actual importance. Their very triviality becomes memorized in its placid contrast to some tragic sequel. So it is with the closing scenes of De Morgan's life.

Christmas Day, 1916, passed peacefully, with its immunity from air-raids and its increased allowance of provisions, having even a semblance of festivity. William and Evelyn came to luncheon, and never had he seemed in better health and spirits. The constitutional delicacy which had haunted his younger days seemed to have passed, leaving in its stead an autumnal vigour of mind and body which belied the seventy-seven years of a busy life that had drifted over him—belied, above all, the stress of the last ten years and of all which he had accomplished since the publication of *Joseph Vance*. He talked happily, full of hope and confidence in the ultimate good which he felt sure was approaching a stricken, blood-stained world. A vista of peaceful days and renewed capacity for work seemed to stretch before him. Even the crimson roses—a Christmas gift—with which the table was decorated in profusion, were to him a happy augury of summer and sunshine, while he dwelt with æsthetic pleasure on their gorgeous petals showing in velvet beauty against the dark oak and shining silver.

On the morrow, Boxing Day, the visit was returned. We groped our way through the darkened streets to Church Street, and found William and his wife dispensing tea to a solitary visitor in khaki. The stranger, we learnt, was an officer from the front; he had come from France on the previous day; and having read *Joseph Vance* in the trenches he had determined that his first visit in England should be to the author of the book he had so much enjoyed. 'There was a Fate about it,' Evelyn remarked lightly. 'Knowing the servants would be out to-day, I wrote to tell him not to come, but he never got the letter.' There was a Fate about it, perhaps, of which she little dreamed.

We sat on through the dusk, the room lit only by dim candles and the ruddy gleam of the fire. As desultory talk rose and fell, it transpired that the officer was in the Air Force, and William eagerly seized upon the opportunity thus afforded to gain information on a problem connected with his new flying machine which had baffled him. 'I wish you would look at a model of an aeroplane I am constructing,' he said. 'Come to my study—the light is better there for seeing it.' The two men left the room. For half an hour they were shut up in close proximity in William's little sitting-room; then they returned; and the stranger said good-bye.

Out in the hall we heard them talking. William had discovered connecting links among acquaintances common to them both, and was plying his new friend with questions concerning these. The stranger's final answer came with a note of melancholy: 'My father is dead, my mother is dead; my aunt whom you remember is dead—every one connected with me is dead. Good-bye.' And as William came back into the room he observed quaintly in reference to the visitor's last remark, 'Well—that's a nice cheerful state of affairs—*Every one connected with him is dead!* I thought, under the circumstances, there was only one thing to be done—so I gave him a copy of *When Ghost Meets Ghost!*'

That was on Tuesday. On the following Friday evening, December 29, William, feeling strangely tired, laid down his pen in the middle of an unfinished sentence in *The Old Mad House*. By the morning he was ill; before nightfall he was raving in the delirium of trench fever. For seventeen days that continued; and during all that time he believed he was a wounded soldier in a hospital in France. With piteous reiteration he kept imploring that some one would take him back to his home—to his wife, while she, poor soul, sat, a frozen image of grief, waiting for the one moment of recognition, the one word of farewell which was never granted. On the seventeenth day he found rest; and she was left to face a darkened world with a broken heart.

And as he lay dead, the following letter came:—

A Stranger to William De Morgan.

'WASHINGTON,
'*January 1st*, 1917.

'Dear Father of Joey and Lossie, Saucy Sally, loving little Lizerann and brave blind Jim, sweet old Mrs. Picture and darling Alice-for-Short, on this bright New Year's day I want to write to you friendlywise. I truly believe that the people you have created for me are more real, more tangible, more comfortable, than any others I have met, in literature, or out of it.

'In this present tragic hour your books have been my greatest comfort—for your view of life, too, is the real one—more real than the other, I keep telling myself. Some day we humans now at variance will be able to understand each other once more, and once more find each other kind and amusing, and good for every-day hard wear.

'You taught me to love a good fight; but I can't love this fight, or feel hopeful of the sort of *blessings* which will be the outcome. . . . Then I remember such affection as Lizerann's and Blind Jim's—so lovely, it is its own excuse for being; and then I remember that, before the war there was a man in England whose books oozed love and tenderness in every line, not by preachments, but by a gracious, mirthful humour which warms and heartens. There is no "*for a' that*" with you. The trimmings are all in the picture—a necessary part or background—explaining, heightening, vivifying each character, never condemning by excuse.

'I wish you a happy New Year, wondering what new brain-children for us to love you are creating now—if (shall I say as I pray God is the case?)—you can still write to the thunder of the guns.'

During the days which followed, other letters came to the silent house, bringing the balm of a sympathy expressed in sorrowing words: 'How sad it all is!' Sir William Richmond wrote to Evelyn. 'How I feel for you in the loss of your companion, and such a gentle one, for so many years. . . . He never grew old, he changed nothing since I first knew him fifty-six years ago. I expect, with his ups and downs counted, he had a very happy life, such simple characters usually have.' 'He was a wonderful man,' wrote Sir Edward Poynter, 'and his beautiful nature came out in his books and his intercourse with his friends. I do not believe he ever had an evil thought in his life. Everybody who knew him will regret his loss and his delightfully sympathetic and amusing conversation.' Maurice Hewlett likewise wrote: 'I value everything I can remember of him. I feel myself the better man for having known him. As for his books, they are part of himself, and I have almost made them part of myself; they are unique, as all books must be which faithfully express so rare a spirit as his. Those who love them will not let them die; and the number of their lovers will increase.'

One letter of a more personal nature may perhaps be quoted:—

Lady Burne-Jones to Mrs. De Morgan.

'ROTTINGDEAN,
'*Jan.* 19, 1917.

'MY POOR DEAR GIRL (always that to me),—

'The news of your bereavement only reached me this morning, and is hard to believe. Yours was one of the blessed marriages, and it will never end, but the pain of this separation cannot be expressed either by you or your friends. I only write to say that I have heard of it, and that I am with you at heart.

'I long to know something of you—and shall do so in time . . . at such a time, however, details have ceased to be important—all is swallowed up in the tremendous fact.

'The thought of trench-fever and its seeking a victim here is tragic among a thousand tragedies. I heard that he took the war very much to heart. . . .

'I have a treasured remembrance of the last time I saw him when I was cheered to see him looking better and younger than when we had met before. . . . His immovable friendship is in no way dimmed to me by death—as it never was by distance of time or place; for me he cannot die, but still lives, amongst memories that nothing can wipe out. And for this I am very thankful.

'For all the long years of our unchanging friendship I thank God; and for how much more must you have to return thanks,—none but yourself knows. In these terrible days it is beautiful to feel that the best things remain unchanged, and that Love is still the key of the world.

'My dear, forgive these stumbling words—but it touches me to the heart for you.

'Always your affectionate old friend,
'G. BURNE-JONES.'

By and by, hundreds wrote from all parts of the world, and one perhaps spoke the feelings of all those unknown friends:—

'I never saw him, yet I feel, as many will feel when they read the news of his death, that I have lost a dear friend. I am reading his last book, and in reading I seem to know the tone of his voice and to feel the sunshine of his spirit. He has left a very precious legacy to a world which will not forget.

Among the many Obituary notices which appeared after his death one in the *Manchester Guardian* may be cited for its especial insight:—

'With the death of Mr. William De Morgan our day suffers a loss of a kind it can very ill afford. Intellectual brilliancy is fairly common among us, but intellectual brilliancy entirely subdued to the service of observation and sympathy is exceedingly rare. . . .

'His peculiar achievement lies in the degree in which he has placed the characteristics of our contemporary life in permanent horizons. . . . From his vantage ground of years he has perceived characteristics of our generation as we who belong to it never could have done. His open-mindedness and perception have been amazing; to the end he was singularly up-to-date, singularly *au fait* with all the most modern of our pessimisms; yet ever and always he has seen the heart of life as "somehow good"; all his complex understanding resulted only in the deepening and strengthening of his humanity and his hope. He has understood the complexities of modern existence (had he not, he would have been

of small use to our day). But beneath and behind these things he ever recalls us, should we perchance have forgotten them, to the simple well-springs of happiness and of life.

'Foremost, perhaps, in our gratitude to-day will be thanks for the laughter, the rollicking entertainment he has given us. His books have brimmed with a fun that in its breadth and its sanity is almost Shakespearean. . . . Yet it is on the deepest, the most serious of notes that our tribute, if it is to touch the highest of his gifts, must come to rest. Passionate lover of human beauty that he was, Mr. De Morgan had to outlive the most splendid and vital of his comrades. Before he began writing books the engrossing question seemed to him to be (and is there any other that really appears engrossing as life goes on?) the question as to personal immortality, the nature of human identity. That problem Mr. De Morgan was pursuing from the first to the last of his novels. Which of us who has read it can forget the "ghost in the corpse" conversation in *Joseph Vance*; which of us has dared to question Lizerann's appearance to Jim Coupland at the moment of his death; which of us has not wrestled, battled alongside as it were, the facing of the problem from its roots in *When Ghost Meets Ghost*?

'This, then, among innumerable minor gifts, is Mr. De Morgan's priceless bequest to us. He has stood outside (almost aggressively outside) religious denominations. That, perhaps, is what has given his "neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" its bell-like and resonant quality. He felt, and out of the depth and richness of his feeling he has communicated to us, poignant sadness at the transiency of life upon earth. Artist that he was, he might, as the lesser artists almost always have done, have employed his powers in building palaces, "poetic" shelters from the facts, for himself and his peers. He chose, instead, to face life unflinchingly. He took the myriad facets, activities, perversities of contemporary society, and so endeared to us person after person and type after type that with his gallery—his revelation of underlying unity and beauty—before us we dare not, while his spell is over us at least, doubt that there is something more eternal in human personality than in any of the phenomena enveloping existence.'

In life, De Morgan had more than once been compared to his own heroine Lossie, of whom it was said that when she entered a room it was as though some one had suddenly drawn up the blinds and let in the sunshine. A many-sided genius, with his wonderful work as a ceramic artist, his knowledge as a scientist and an inventor, and his final revelation as a novelist, he had been acclaimed as an Idealist and yet a Realist, a resuscitation from a long-dead Past, and yet a modern of the moderns. But the aspect of his character which, in death, dwelt most lingeringly in the hearts of his fellows was his gift of eternal youth, of immortal hope, of inextinguishable love and laughter. In their remembrance he lived as they had known him—delightful in his simplicity, his kindly spirit, his bubbling fun, his unruffled contentment—a man who, to the last, had retained, untarnished, the heart of a little child.

* * * * *

On January 23 the mortal remains of William De Morgan were borne to the Old Church, facing the grey river; that

ancient building which for so many years in his thoughts had enshrined the history and the romance of Chelsea. There under a violet pall he slept, while in the grey light of a wintry day sweet boy-voices sang his requiem. Among the mourners were the children and the grandchildren of Burne-Jones, and the daughter of William Morris; while numbers who had never known him in life came to pay a last tribute to the man whose genius had gladdened them, and whose rare personality had won an affection such as few men win. Thus amidst the music and the flowers he had once rejoiced in, he passed on to his final resting-place in Brookwood Cemetery, then a lovely space of unspoilt moorland, where, about the spot chosen for his grave, the heather grew thickly, and the wind in the pine-trees sang an eternal dirge. And there, as the coffin sank to earth, Florentine blossoms from the land he had loved mingled with the snowflakes which were falling fast, while from the silence that had engulfed him one seemed to hear again the voice of the brave spirit which had fled:—

'I am ready for extinction or extension, whichever and whenever. Only if the latter, all I stipulate for is absolute good on the terms that the Master shall manage it, and that we shall all be safeguarded against the rack of this tough world.'

WILLIAM FREND DE MORGAN,
1839–1917.
Artist: Potter: Inventor: Novelist.
"Sorrow is only of Earth,
The life of the Spirit is joy."
Head-stone designed by Evelyn De Morgan for the grave of William De Morgan.

CHAPTER XVII

THE 'LONG DIMINUENDO'

1917–1919

'If Chance should to my workshop send
A certain silent fleshless friend,
Then while Day lasts Thy legions lend
And hold him from the stair!
But when the best tool slips away,
And he would idle who must stay,
If once against the Dark I'd pray—
Deliver me from prayer!'

LITTLE more remains to tell; and it must be told in a minor key. In the solitary home Evelyn De Morgan took up life again with a fine courage, but a grief so intense that before it even sympathy was hushed to silence. Body and soul were alike smitten by the blow which had fallen; and during the dark months which followed, it was as though the frail tenement, propelled by an indomitable will but waxing ever more and more ethereal, fought on pathetically, while the spirit which had animated it was far away. Looking at her sometimes one thought of a sentence which her husband had written in his last book: 'All the Hereafters in the Universe would be no worse for me than life in the dark without you, here and now.'

'One felt,' relates Miss Morris, 'that it was only her high courage and that instinct spoken of by William Morris as "desiring to see the play played out" that kept her spirit battling here. The house was empty, the hearth cold; often on visiting her, amid pauses in some intimate evening of music and talks of Italy and former days, with her portrait of the old friend looking down upon us and his work all about, one felt this acutely, and behind the cheery good-night was the unspoken understanding and the shared sense of loss.'

But there was work still to be accomplished, and she grasped the severed threads of life bravely. 'Mr. De Morgan,' announced the Press, 'has done what none of his readers will ever be able to do—he has left one of his novels unfinished!' Moreover, the chain of coincidence connected with his fiction had followed it

to the last, and the similarity between the uncompleted novel by Charles Dickens, and the uncompleted novel, *The Old Mad House*, by De Morgan, was at once remarked, since both dealt with the mysterious disappearance of one of the characters. But in De Morgan's case he had discussed the *dénouement* with his wife, and she was enabled to supply the missing finale. As his work had first owed its existence to her, so she now determined that no measure of it should be wasted.

With a skill which requires no comment, she summarized the conclusion he had projected, condensing the remainder of a long and intricate plot into one brief chapter, revealing the mystery on which the tale had hinged in language so simple and yet so graphic that the horror of the culminating tragedy is accentuated by her reticence; while the reader can feel no disruption in the continuity of the story, no alteration in the manner of its telling from the point where she took up the pen that had fallen from a dead hand. The whole was dedicated by her to the American readers whose appreciation of the deceased novelist's work had given him some of the happiest moments of his life.

This novel, however, of which she never lived to see the publication, is, admittedly, not the best specimen of De Morgan's fiction. At the time of writing it, as we have seen, he had been too much obsessed with other thoughts—the lure of numberless scientific experiments and inventions on which he was engaged, the nightmare and the tension of the war—all had combined to distract his attention; and revision had subsequently been denied him. Thus, despite the undoubted interest of the volume, one misses in it something of the charm of his happier manner—the shrewd philosophy, the quaint conceits, the nimble wit—in brief, 'the personality which is all in all in the De Morgan novels.'

The other unfinished manuscript which he had judiciously set aside fearing to 'spoil it' during a period of mental tension, would undoubtedly, if concluded, have been one of his finest achievements, a greater and more 'complete human document' even than *Joseph Vance*. It was to have consisted of two volumes, one which dealt with the Old Man's Youth, and the other, of profound pathos, which told the story of the Young Man's Old Age; yet when the tragedy occurred which the writer had dreaded, and his materials outlasted him, it is a matter of congratulation that such portion of the novel as he left had not been marred by any unwise attempt on his part to whip a tired brain into producing inferior workmanship.

At first, however, Heinemann pronounced this latter manuscript to be too incomplete to make publication possible. For the chapters were left in confusion; in some cases different

versions of them existed; the gaps between them had too often no connecting links; and, above all, the plot lacked all hint of its intended conclusion. The difficulty of rendering the whole readable without interference with the text seemed insurmountable; but, by and by, Evelyn saw her way to furnishing the necessary links while leaving her husband's original work untouched; and the *Narrative of Eustace John*, written by De Morgan, is connected by chapters entitled *The Story*, afterwards supplied by his wife.

A small section of the Press later found cause to regret that the book had not been left precisely as its author, William De Morgan, wrote it, without those interpolations by a different hand; but such critics, who were in the minority, failed to grasp how, without the explanations thus afforded, the narrative lacked in point and even coherence. 'Mrs. De Morgan has done a very difficult task most admirably,' pronounced Professor Phelps; and it was pointed out how her workmanship was like that of a clever architect who skilfully conserves the original beauty of some structure through his own self-effacement. For never did she obtrude her own personality; neither did she yield to the temptation to imitate or to emulate De Morgan's own methods. She supplied only what was essential—*what she knew the author himself had intended*—and she presented this in a fashion pithy, concise and forcible, but wholly distinct from his narrative, which, by this means was left intact.[1]

Eighteen months after De Morgan's death, another group of distinguished people met in the Old Church by the river to do honour to his memory. On July 11, 1918, one more monument of interest was added to the history of that ancient building by the unveiling of a tablet placed there in remembrance of the dead author. Both as a ceramic artist and as a novelist it was felt that De Morgan's work had primarily centred in Chelsea —first at Orange House, then at the Vale, and then, during the last phase, in Church Street; and it seemed fitting to commemorate in Chelsea the man who had added yet another name to the roll of celebrated men connected with that locality.

His old friend and associate, Mr. Halsey Ricardo, Past Master of the Art Workers' Guild, undertook the design of the memorial; his other friend and associate, Mr. Reginald Blunt, worded the inscription, which ran as follows:—

[1] It is to be regretted that this book was published in England with the original title (*The Old Man's Youth and the Young Man's Old Age*) curtailed, and thus bereft of its originality and point, an alteration to which neither De Morgan nor his wife would have consented.

To the Memory of
WILLIAM FREND DE MORGAN
Artist—Potter—Inventor—Novelist
Born 16th November 1839 Died 15th January 1917
Who did much of his best work in Cheyne Row, The Vale and Church St., Chelsea
—where he died

Recreating in Ceramic work upon his own vigorous designs the colour of the Persian & the lustre of the great Umbrian craftsmen,
Enriching literature by his faithful & sympathetic presentment of homely & very human character,
And beloved by all who knew his breadth of intellectual interest, his catholic sympathy, genial humour & lambent wit,

THIS TABLET IS DEDICATED BY SOME OF HIS CHELSEA AND PERSONAL FRIENDS.

When the day arrived for the ceremony of the unveiling, the service which preceded this took place to the accompaniment of a strange July thunderstorm which blared and crashed with relentless fury, alternately plunging the picturesque building into gloom, then lighting the dim arches with a lurid gleam. But its rage was spent and, with dramatic effect, a great stillness fell as Miss May Morris, standing in a pew against the north aisle, uncovered the memorial of her father's life-long friend. With eloquent, heartfelt words she spoke of the man who was gone from among them so suddenly 'with work unfulfilled, the brain still rich in invention . . . in all the dignity of his hopeful labours.' Then her thoughts turned to the bygone days with which her own girlhood was linked—to those earlier labours of the dead man with which her own recollection of the past mingled:—

'It is over those activities that I love to linger in thought, for, fully as I delight in the power, the charm of his literary work, the earlier days were more closely linked with the life of my own family; De Morgan was one of the circle of friends who rejoiced in each other in work-days and play-days, who had ideals in common, who shared a common language and understood without language. The story of that bonded life is written in heart and brain of those who had part in it; you who are all friends here will understand that the best of those days one prefers to *remember in silence*. . . .

'Men test their friendship as well as character less by working together than by playing together; many have worked side by side all their lives yet never shared their holiday time. To unbend in common and enjoy each other's quaintnesses, to court the shout of laughter without fear of spoiling or of wasting the common stock or capital of love, this is the privilege of the men whose lives were built up on generosity, a free giving of themselves and their love and their talent, and who understood so well the maxim "*Live with courage.*"

'I have come from my river-side home to share with you this recording of our friendship, and there is not an alley of the old garden that does not echo with the laughter of those days. . . .'

She went on to speak of the dream long cherished by her father and De Morgan that they should combine their two arts—

'and work side by side in a beautiful corner of the Cotswold country which we visited on one of our family excursions. Perhaps the time was not ripe for such a revival of Rural Handicrafts as this would have been in the hands of two men of abnormal energy and ceaseless invention, but it was long talked of and given up with regret. Their happy dream of utilizing the handsome old factories still existing everywhere with their clusters of sturdy well-built cottages, and thus without defacing the country beauty, starting the revival of the old rural industry of England, this dream may prove to be more immediately if humbly practical than might be supposed. In those days it was not considered outside our circle, but smiled at and waved aside. If it does become a reality, it must be remembered with gratitude *that De Morgan was among the pioneers who spread thoughts that blossom into deeds*, and that his spirit, with all its old generosity, will be active still among the forces that are to compel great changes on the inertia and anarchy of modern life. . . .'

She further dwelt on the fact that though, in practice, in his later years, De Morgan had left behind him the activities of earlier life, his old zest in matters of art or invention was never lost, and how one of the last things he was employed on was an invention for use in the war.

'All of us standing here,' she concluded, 'will remember De Morgan in our hearts, needing not this material record of him. It is for the stranger who comes to pray in the Old Church that we raise it, and for the younger people—those who have, perhaps, played as children beside hearths decorated with ships from fairy seas that have moved their young imagination, and that they have dimly known as "De Morgan work"; let them—beginning to take the place of us older ones in the life of art and invention—remember, rather with kindness and friendship than with hero worship, the names of the noble throng of men and women whose thoughts and deeds are inevitably knit up with the stuff of their own lives—among them the name of our friend.'

As reported in the Press, the next speaker, Mr. Edmund Gosse, began by referring to the great adventure of De Morgan's life, his first becoming an author in his sixty-seventh year, at an age before which Balzac and Dickens, Fielding and Zola had long been dead. After enumerating his successive novels, Mr. Gosse thus defined the central quality of De Morgan's work in fiction :—

'I am very much struck with the tranquillity of De Morgan's novels. There seems no stress in them, no anxiety. They move in a social world where the family is not challenged, where religion is quietly respected, where property enjoys all its rights and where the army scarcely seems to exist. What leisure for reflection, what long hours extended in an easy chair! De Morgan seems to be so calmly assured of the stability of the social order that even those errors and those paradoxes which he observes will not avail to disturb his equilibrium. What a storm of social rebellion blows under the smiling surface of Dickens! What revolt against convention in Meredith! What sullen resignation to fate in the vast romances of Thomas Hardy!—William De Morgan has no belief in the approach of a catastrophe.

'Reviewing other characteristics of his literary work, Mr. Gosse mentioned De Morgan's love of his fellow-men as an outstanding feature:—"His temperament, whether in his writing or his art, presented an image of serene confidence in humanity not found elsewhere. His style ignored the French manner altogether; he did not teach, he talked, and that leisurely, with a pervading, tranquil optimism. His books had uniformity and a vivid individuality, although qualities such as form and construction were matters of indifference to their author. He was a true artist, and in these iron times, we do well to remember his gentle, loving and loveable individuality."

'Professor Mackail followed, and completed the tribute to De Morgan as an artist and a writer in a fine scholarly speech, adding a touching, sympathetic appreciation of the man and the friend. He emphasized De Morgan's wide range of interests, his close touch with the complexities of London life and London types, and his literary kinship with Henry Kingsley, whose young days were associated with Chelsea Rectory and Chelsea Church. . . .'

Thus closed the simple ceremony which, in its unaffected tribute of affection and admiration, was fitting to the man it was designed to commemorate; and which moreover, to many present, seemed to knit in romantic sequence a long train of illustrious dead whose memorials hung upon the ancient walls, linking the days of William De Morgan to the far-away days of his precursor in literature, Sir Thomas More.

Meanwhile, Evelyn De Morgan was engaged upon a memorial of a different type. She had designed and modelled a headstone for her husband's grave which was afterwards carved in marble under the supervision of Sir George Frampton, and is a work of beauty and pathos. The fine disposal of the draperies, the grace of the outline noticeable throughout, are yet subordinate to the pervading sense which it conveys of repressed but poignant tragedy. Two figures are represented in bas-relief. One, a mourner, bowed with grief, is extinguishing a lighted torch. All the anguish of a great separation, all the sorrow of a broken heart, seem expressed in the profound dejection of that drooping figure; and the face is the face of Evelyn De Morgan. In striking contrast, by the side of the sorrowful form a winged and joyous Psyche, with airy poise and happy gesture, is striving to wean her from her grief. Beneath is inscribed a sentence which occurred in one of the letters from 'Angels' written in automatic writing by Evelyn and her husband:—

'Sorrow is only of Earth; the life of the Spirit is joy.'

While this bas-relief was being completed, Evelyn was likewise painting with the persistence of happier days. The keynote of existence to her had been work; and now in her sorrow the habit remained with her, and brought with it a measure of consolation. During those last two years of her life, her achievement showed no sign of diminished energy, since, besides finishing her husband's two novels and executing the monument for his

grave, as related, she was preparing for a fresh exhibition of war-pictures which she intended to have in the spring.

Some of the last of this series of symbolic paintings had been nearly completed in the autumn of 1918. One, entitled 'A Scrap of Paper,' shows Civilization, a crowned figure, clad in regal purple, sitting amongst the wreckage of temples and fair palaces, while at her feet lies the fatal document of her ruin, torn in half. Another picture represents 'The Coming of Peace.' A figure of serene loveliness, in floating draperies of transparent white and encircled by the rainbow of promise, is seen approaching over a barren land. The calm beauty of her face is yet full of a great sadness, as though reminiscent of past pain; and before her, two gigantic blood-stained hands, emblematic of the terror which is vanishing, are sinking, writhing, into the waters in the foreground.

Still penetrated by the horror of the war, increased now by a profound loneliness, the mentality of Evelyn De Morgan, as reflected in her pictures, showed something of the grim imagination of her childhood. 'I feel I must tell you,' wrote Mrs. Stillman after visiting her studio, 'what a splendid impression your beautiful work made on me, and how healing in this terrible time it is to see your lovely Peace Madonna and others; one would wish to see them always and to live with them . . . but several of your later ones frighten me, I confess, and I am not sure I feel your exquisite work should be used in that way.' For a sharp divergence was noticeable between the work produced by Evelyn during this last sad phase and the fair, joyous beauty of her earlier manner when each picture which she achieved was a crystallized poem, a glory of colour and of radiant dreams. Into her loveliest fancies now had crept a note of tragedy, a sense of evil which would not be repressed. In only one, perhaps, belonging to this period, has an idea of poetic symbolism materialized from her brush untouched by any sorrowful influence—the beautiful little picture called 'The Moonbeams dipping into the sea' of which she made three copies, none of which, however, were finished.

For the perpetual darkness of that winter of 1918–19 made it impossible to complete the work. Grey, sunless skies prevailed day after day; and to many it seemed a time of yet greater gloom, physically and mentally, than any that had preceded it. None were immune from the Shadow and the stress of the war. Prior to the Armistice, while ten kingdoms were locked in the final throes of a fierce death-struggle, there came from the Continent tales of woe and cruelty calculated to unnerve the strongest; and even with the suspension of hostilities the nightmare of bloodshed and grief still brooded over a tortured world. The dawning of a year of peace and promise brought little of the

anticipated gladness, while the prolongation of wintry weather beyond the usual period served further to undermine the endurance of many who were suffering from the previous strain, or whose constitutions had been lowered by insufficient and less nourishing food. The absence of sunshine and the penetrating cold continued long after spring should have brightened the land; and the coming of April brought no relief. 'I can't get on in this darkness,' Evelyn complained, as she waited throughout the month with her unfinished work around her—'if only the sunlight would come!' Then followed a brief spell of yet more intense cold, of snow, of bitter, raking blizzard; and when it passed, on May 2, Evelyn De Morgan lay dead.

* * * * *

When Death comes with tragic suddenness, the little homely accessories of daily life take on a new and pitiful aspect. Four days before, she had painted from dawn to dusk. The unfinished picture stood upon the easel, the paints were as yet wet upon the palette: all the paraphernalia lay ready for the continuance of the work which would never be continued; and the very air seemed penetrated with the voice, the presence that were gone for ever. Dying thus with the blight of Age unknown, she had at least been spared one crucial sorrow of existence, when the passion for labour outlasts the faculty of achieving it. But in the case of a very vivid personality, full of vitality, of strongly marked characteristics, it is as impossible to accept its swift extinction as it is to connect that Thing of strange and marble beauty, lying so still in the mystery of dissolution, with the human being we so lately loved—who so lately was full of the glad restlessness of mood and motion. It is the quietude of Death even more than its unconcern which strikes a chill to the mind of the living.

And before that silence which had fallen, it mattered little what name the doctor called the malady that had killed her in those four brief days. Medical science has no panacea for a broken heart. But to those who loved her there seemed a significance in the fact that when, after death, they took from her the sapphire ring which her lover had given her, the stone was found shattered from end to end.

* * * * *

A few days later the tragedy of that cruel separation was at last erased. She was laid to rest in the grave where her husband had preceded her, under the handiwork which had been to her the expression of a bitter grief; and in that moment the sunshine which had been obscured by a mist broke forth—the sunshine that had come too late. Yet it flooded the world with light, so that, in that sudden coming of spring, the air was full of the song of birds, the tender green of the young trees stood revealed

in delicate tracery against a blue sky, and yellow butterflies, like flecks of gold, were disporting themselves above the grave. Spring had come; and with it a reunion of lovers. 'It is as much the end as it ever is,' De Morgan had written in *Joseph Vance*; 'The long diminuendo had died down to silence, or to a pause followed by a new movement that we who are left in the silence could not hear.'

* * * * *

In the lovely spring-time which followed Evelyn's death, her friend Miss Morris wrote sadly:—

'Her genius may have posthumous recognition with the world—but that is all so stupid and cold, and doesn't matter to us who wanted her to go on living and working. . . . The news of her death seems still unreal to me . . . yet I am sure it was only her courage and fine spirit that kept her alive since William went. She was lost without him. . . .

'The other day I rode to the place where thousands of fritillaries grow—(The week before I wanted them for her, but could not get there)—and sat down on the way by the beautiful canal. Just opposite was a miracle of an apple-tree reflected in the water. It was most wonderful and made me think much of her, as it was the sort of loveliness she delighted in painting. . . .

'An old friend wrote, on reading the *Westminster Gazette*, saying how shocked and sorry he was, and recalling the first time he saw her and "instantly loved her." She was coming up from the river-meadow here, looking so fresh and happy and full of life. . . .'

'So fresh and happy and full of life!' the words sting with the bitterness of contrast. Yet looking to-day at the quiet grave wherein lie so still the busy hands and vivid brains which once wrought all that loveliness in the world of men, one feels that those two who sleep there have known the greatest good that earth could offer. For it has been claimed that the best thing in life—and death—is to make the world better than we found it; and the next best is to leave it more beautiful.

Respecting the work which Evelyn De Morgan left behind her, it may be added that she bequeathed all the pictures in her studio at her death to be sold by public auction for the soldiers who had been blinded during the war; while the finest specimens of her husband's lustre-ware of which she died possessed, executed by him during the final closing-down of the factory, she left as a gift to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Her earlier pictures, of which she kept no record, are dispersed about the world; but the present writer has a fine and representative collection of both pictures and pottery, which will eventually be offered to the nation, unless in the interval some philanthropist cares to concentrate them in a De Morgan Gallery, commemorative of two remarkable lives and of an interesting phase in our national art.

In regard to the pictures in this collection, Sir Luke Fildes, R.A., shortly after Evelyn's death, received the following letter from a correspondent who had closely studied her painting :—

'I was interested in your wishing to know something of her methods. There must have been great stretches of labour between her dreams and their realization. She did not paint her fellow-creatures, but beings of her imagination in the spheres of esoteric belief, and she is alone in her consummate methods of expression. She never, so far as I have seen, produced the texture of Holbein, but some of her work is as delicate, and reaches the perfection of Albert Dürer. Her craftsmanship has a stupendous range, and a careful study of her work reveals the existence of a thousand secrets that will never be known. She painted all day long and nearly every day for more than forty years.

'To me her supreme quality is the purity and brilliance of her palette. She seemed to be in possession of a faculty analogous to the tuning fork of a musician to which she could always refer her problems without losing the exact pitch of a single note. She had the imagination of a poet in the languages of form and colour with the genius of a great musician in the harmonies of vision.

'The subjects that engrossed her contemplation were Epic, yet, revelling in the lyrics of the daisy and violet, she justified the imagery of Shakespeare by " painting meadows with delight."

'As the possessor of all these wonderful gifts, with the capacity for giving them full and manifold expression, she was alone in a world that must have seemed sordid when she looked down and not worthy of consideration when she looked up. Reward she had none and has gone to her rest.

'Her fame must now wait, as far as I can see, upon the future operations of speculative dealers, as happened with Millet, Corot, M. Maris, and their fraternity.

'Some day, perhaps not far distant, when a big " corner " has been made, the doubtful Gainsborough and dubious Hals will be removed from the galleries of docile millionaires and replaced by De Morgans, where they will hang, let us hope, as a standing rebuke to the vulgarity of the buyers and their motives for buying. . . .

'Enough, enough, it is a mad and foolish world and a planet that was not fit for Evelyn De Morgan to live in. . . .'

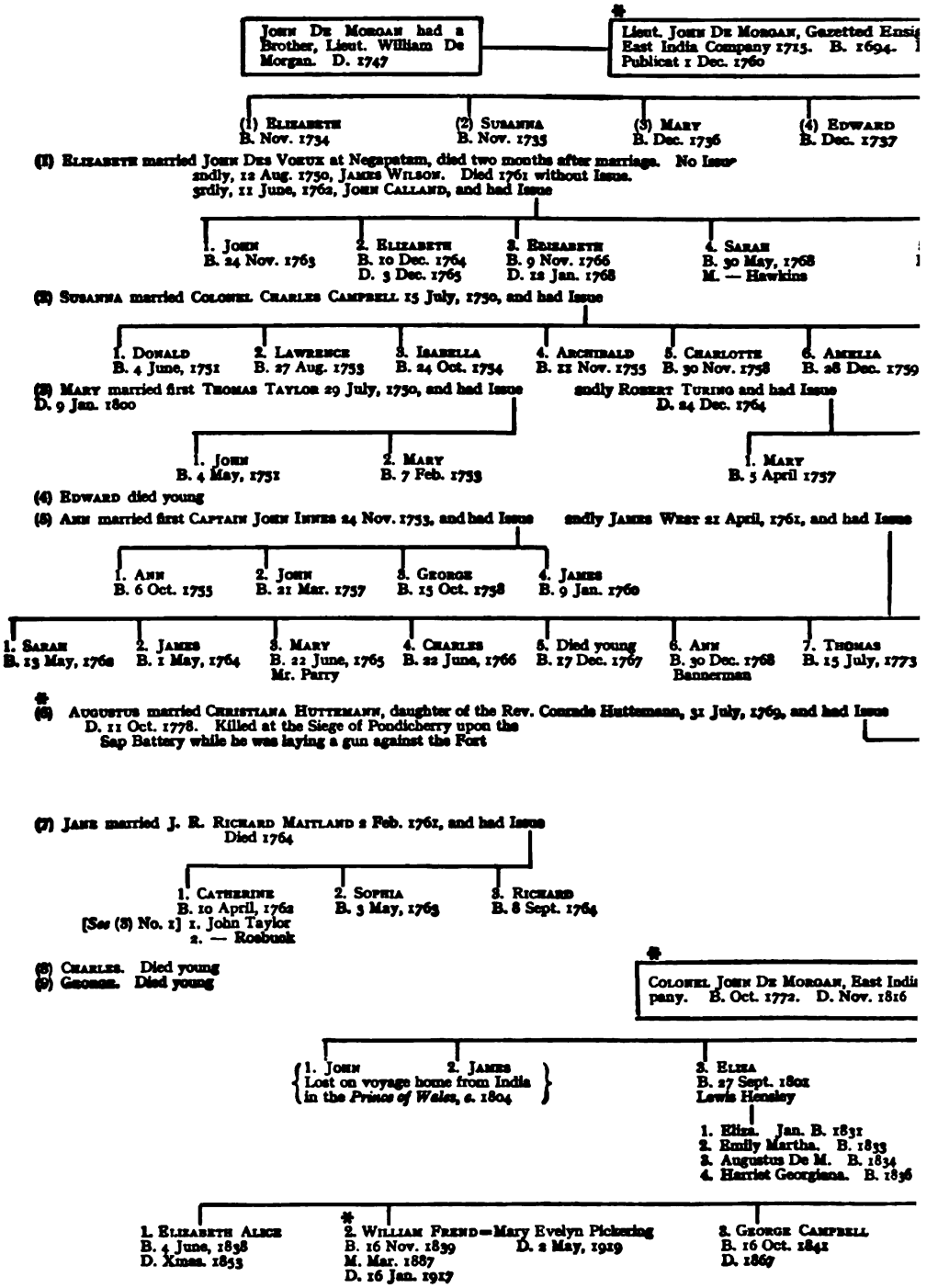
In Memoriam

Evelyn De Morgan pinxit

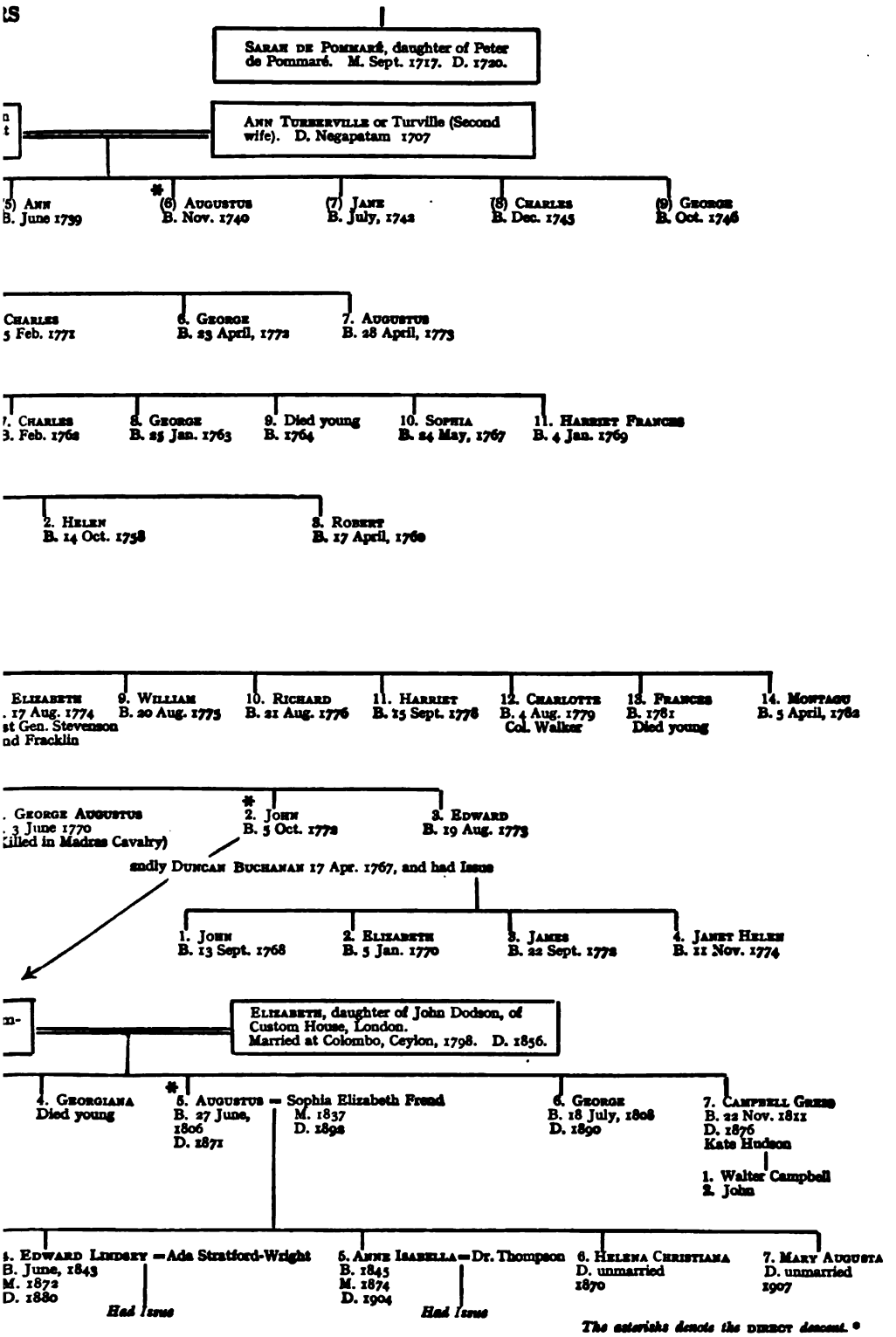
In purple draperies, and holding a wreath of immortelles.

ANGLO-INDIAN ANCESTORS OF WILLIAM DE MORGAN

ANGLO-INDIAN ANCESTO
OF
WILLIAM DE MORGA



* *The asterisks denote the* DIRECT *descent.*



The asterisk denotes the DIRECT *descent.*

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